

PRESERVING SEA RANCH HISTORY
A HISTORICAL JOURNEY
ON OUR TRAILS



CELEBRATING THE SEA RANCH'S
50TH BIRTHDAY



By The Sea Ranch Archives Committee
Written By Harry Lindstrom, May, 2014

RESPECTING PEOPLE, LAND AND SEA

Stay on the Trails

Respect the property of others.

Keep dogs on leash.

No bicycle riding on the Bluff Trail and elsewhere prohibited by posted signs.

No smoking.

Be responsible for your own safety.

If you are renting or visiting at The Sea Ranch, be sure to display the tag supplied by your rental agency on your vehicle's rearview mirror or dashboard, or your vehicle will be subject to citation and immobilization. Carry your pass with you when hiking the trails. The pass from your rental agency must be shown to enter any of the recreation centers. Guests staying with members should obtain vehicle tags and passes from their host.

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HOW TO USE THE BOOKLET

The booklet is arranged by listing the 25 sites from north to south. There are identifying numbers for each site, *i.e.*, 35E-1 Gualala Lumber Mill. The number/letters preceding the dash indicate The Sea Ranch unit number where the marker is located. The second number from 1 to 25 is the location number, beginning on the north end with 1. There are also seven maps to assist you in finding the historical markers.

For those readers who may wish to read this booklet as a chronological history, following is a suggested order:

Introduction, Page 10	The Beginning
36A-16, Page 59	Original Settlement
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35E-7, Page 34	Lumber Mill Railroad and Worker Housing
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39B-10, Page 41	Del Mar Ravine
25A-23, Page 77	Logging Techniques
34A-13, Page 49	Del Mar Schoolhouse
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18-21, Page 71	Smugglers Cove
35E-11, Page 43	Ohlson Family Era
30A-22, Page 73	World War II Radar Station
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Because we wished to limit the size of this booklet for convenience and cost, only a select bibliography has been included on [page 87](#). If someone would like a more comprehensive list of resources or has any questions, corrections or comments about the booklet, please contact Harry Lindstrom at harrylindstrom@msn.com.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of our project has been another community success. Following are some of our neighbors who have been actively involved with it throughout the many months it has taken.

Many, many thanks to Susan Clark who provided the majority of the pictures found in this booklet ([see Picture Credits on Page 85](#)). Many of them are from her wonderful book: "Images of America – The Sea Ranch." Her extensive research of the area's history was a major source of reference in composing this manuscript. Susan is an architectural historian, managing a historical consulting business in Santa Rosa. She lives on The Sea Ranch, is actively involved in the community and has played an important role in maintaining The Sea Ranch's historical heritage, including preservation of historical structures which serve as important monuments to the people, community and way of life which created and inspired the environment we enjoy today.

The Sea Ranch Board of Directors was very supportive and provided us a public forum to present our ideas and hear comments from our fellow Sea Ranchers.

We want to express our appreciation to The Sea Ranch Planning Committee, Trails Committee and the Design Committee for their advice, assistance and guidance. Lisa Scott and Bill Wiemeyer of the latter committee spent many hours with us through the approval process and around The Sea Ranch evaluating the appropriateness of the sites.

Frank Bell, our Community Manager, helped steer us through the approval process offering his insightful critiques about our ideas.

John Prescott and Ted Huenemeyer of Facilities and Resources are owed many thanks for their extra effort in getting the posts installed in addition to their numerous other responsibilities.

We want to express our appreciation to The Sea Ranch Lodge and its General Manager, Lowell Johnson for generously allowing us to place an historical marker on their property recognizing the historical significance of Black Point and Bihler Point.

The Archives Committee Members would in particular like to recognize member Harry Lindstrom. The Historical Marker Project involved all of the Archives Committee, but its genesis and realization are due to the tireless efforts of Harry. It is a result of his vision, knowledge, research, creativity, initiative and determination. The rest of the committee wishes to thank him for his leadership on the project, and to acknowledge his singular work in advancing and enhancing the goals of the Archives Committee.

HISTORICAL MARKER PROJECT SPONSORS

The following people and organizations have provided financial support to the Archives Committee for this project, and we wish to thank them for their generosity in helping us recognize the rich historical significance of our community.

MAJOR SPONSORS

Sonoma County Landmarks Commission, sponsor of the nine markers on the public trails on The Sea Ranch.
The Sea Ranch Foundation
Larry Jacobs and Mirka Knaster

HISTORICAL MARKER SPONSORS

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John & Nancy Fox	39B-10
Elyse & Paul Johnson	24-15
Larry Jacobs & Mirka Knaster	35E-11 & 1-25
Lois & Harry Lindstrom	40-20
Drew McCalley & Marilyn Green	35E-7
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Bill & Mary Retzer	40-19
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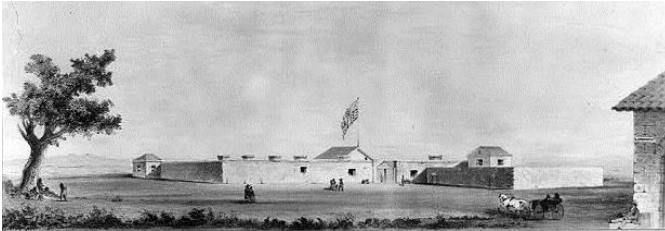
THE BEGINNING

Native Americans first occupied the area we call The Sea Ranch, as well as the areas north and south of us. They, above all, may have had the most respect for “living lightly on the land.” Where they lived, what they grew and what they ate provided the early settlers guidance on surviving in this remote area. Russians established Fort Ross in 1812 to supply their outposts in Alaska with food that couldn’t be grown in that region. They also hunted highly desirable otter pelts, recruiting Native-Americans to do much of the hunting for them. By 1841 the otter population had been depleted and the fort as a supply source for Alaska had not been as successful as originally hoped. The Russians sold their fort to German immigrant, John Sutter, who had established his own fort where Sacramento is today. Sutter took much of the livestock, personal property and building materials to Sacramento.

Sutter sent fellow Germans William Benitz in 1843 and later Ernst Rufus to handle his affairs at Fort Ross. Benitz was in charge. Rufus had distinguished himself at Sutter’s Fort by training Native Americans to be soldiers. He then used the force in support of California’s Mexican Governor Micheltoreno to suppress a rebellion. California was still under Mexican rule. This would not change until 1848. This service of Rufus in support of Mexico would serve him in good stead a couple years later. Sutter first came to California in 1839 in search of a place for his “New Helvetia.” He found it in the Sacramento Valley, and after negotiating the grant with Mexican officials, he formed a party in

San Francisco to accompany him to Sacramento. A member of that party was Frederick Hugal, a carpenter who had been building a mill in Sonoma County and went to San Francisco after he completed the construction.

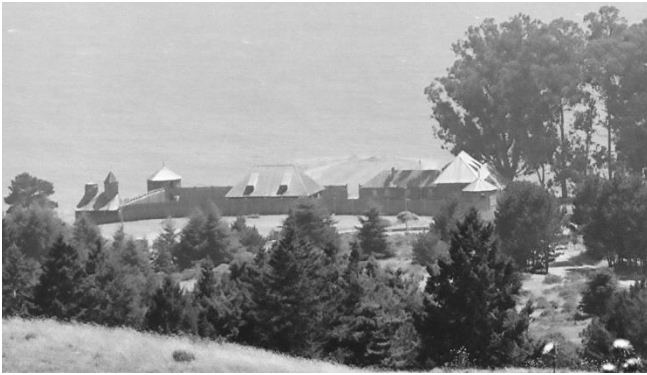
There he met Sutter, who no doubt needed carpenters, joined Sutter's group, and headed up the Sacramento River. At Sutter's Fort Hugal probably met Rufus. Pictured is Sutter's Fort about 1847.



Henry Hegeler was a ship's carpenter who came to Bodega with his former ship's captain to build a sawmill. When Hugal returned to the area after leaving Sutter's Fort, he met Hegeler, and the two Germans formed a carpentry partnership.

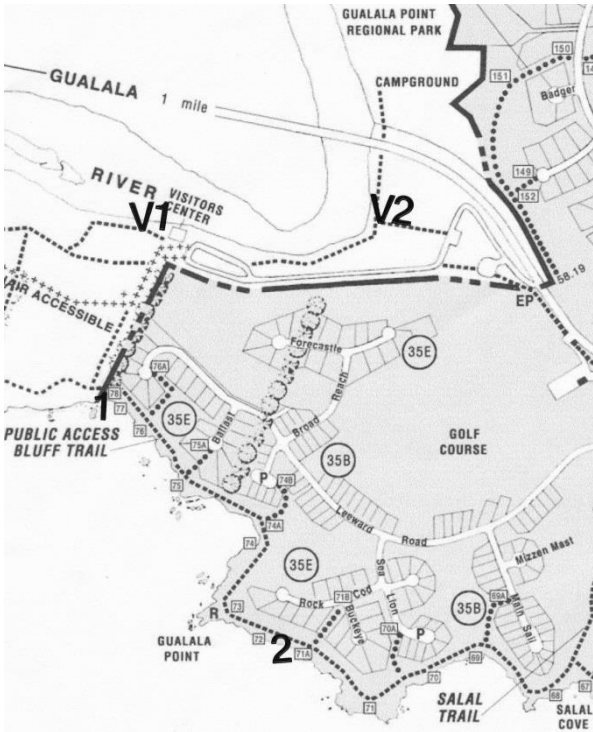
Rufus and Benitz at Fort Ross formed a partnership to grow potatoes and acquire land. They eventually became interested in land north of Fort Ross, which would become known as the German Rancho. Part of this rancho would become The Sea Ranch. Rufus, because of his previously mentioned military service to Mexico and his lengthy residency in Mexican California, had the necessary stature to apply for a land grant. He, therefore, was dispatched to acquire a grant for the German Rancho. He did so in 1846, but in his name only, since Mexican authorities would agree to only one name on the grant for greater control. Another

requirement of the grant was that a settlement needed to be established and the land needed to be worked. Rufus had a jump on this since he had already sent Frederick Hugal to the German Rancho in 1845 with a herd of cattle to begin the settlement. Somewhere along the line, Hegeler joined the partnership, no doubt through his relationship with Hugal.



Pictured is Fort Ross in 2012 on its 200th anniversary.

MAP 1



GUALALA LUMBER MILL
35E-1, MAP 1, PAGE 13

Cyrus Dwight Robinson married Elizabeth Davidson in 1845 in Pennsylvania, where both were born. They moved to Illinois shortly thereafter, where their first three children were born: Cyrus Jr. 1846, Frank 1850 and Lizzie 1854. By 1855 they had made their way to California where a fourth child was born. They may have lived in various places before they reached the Mendocino coast in 1858. In the 1860 census Robinson described himself as a ferryman, but he, no doubt, was working at establishing himself in the hotel business after claiming a large piece of land which would become today's Gualala. This established Cyrus Robinson as the town's founding father.

Shortly after his claim was legitimized, he sold a portion opposite China Gulch to John S. Rutherford, Rutherford's partner George Webber, and their financial backer Nathaniel Page. The gulch runs along the current Stage Road. The three men established the area's first lumber mill, taking advantage of the booming lumber business. Robinson maintained control of the ferry and built his hotel business, and eventually completed the Gualala House. He also constructed a landing off today's Robinson's Point to load lumber, convey other cargo, and transport passengers. The landing was not a success once Morton Bourn established his landing ([pictured on page 17](#)) a couple of miles north. Robinson appears to have missed this site that became one of the most active landings along the Mendocino and Sonoma coast.



Pictured is Robinson's Gualala House located where the Cypress Village is today.

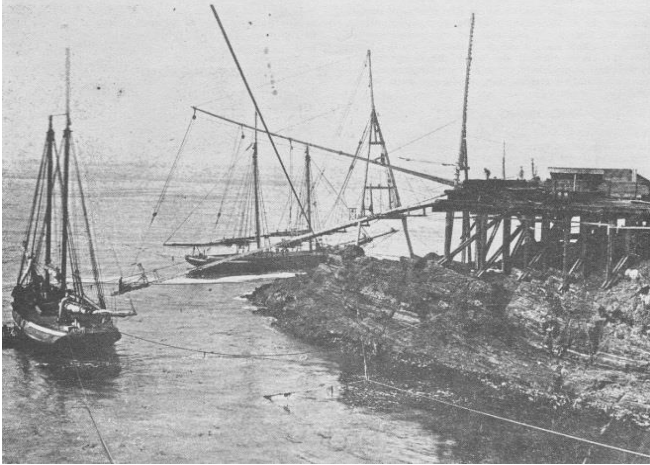
The California Gold Rush in the Sierra Foothills was the main event precipitating a timber rush to the north coast of California. Lumber mills, landings and specially designed ships were constructed to facilitate the processing of the timber once it was harvested from the woods. The mills were either built along the coast close to a landing or in the woods close to the logging operations. Landings were constructed along the ocean, often perched precariously on the bluff with chutes and/or wire rigging dangling above the dangerous surf to handle loading and unloading of lumber, other cargo and people. The ships used were called "doghole" schooners. Compared to other ships these were shorter, wider and with shallower hulls. The design allowed them to get into coves so small "a dog couldn't turn around in them," allowed them to navigate in shallow depths, be more stable in the breakers and more maneuverable around the numerous rocks.

Rutherford, Webber and Page established their mill opposite China Gulch in 1862 after purchasing the land from Cyrus Robinson. Shortly thereafter they purchased a section of Bourns Landing and then built a railroad from the mill to the landing. In 1868 Rutherford and Webber sold to Zemri Heywood and Samuel Harmon. They got the mill running again after a fire and began building a much larger facility a short distance up the Gualala River where it bends before going under today's bridge. The mill prospered, and Gualala became a mill town supporting the largest industry in the area, employing approximately 150 men.

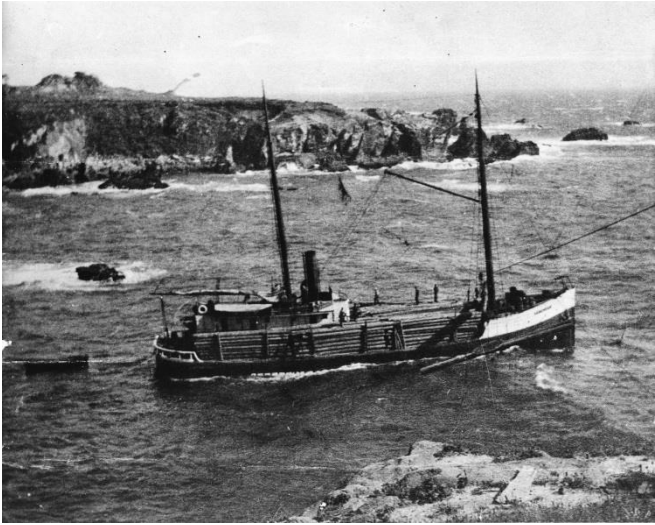
By this time a man named William Bihler owned the German Rancho. It was being successfully managed by his nephew Christian Stengel and another man named Adam Knipp. Bihler, who was concentrating on his Lakeville ranch, did develop an interest in north coast logging. He had substantial timber acreage and around 1866 began selling some of it to the Gualala Mill. Bihler and Captain Charles L. Dingley became partners with William Heywood (Zemri's son, who took over his father's interest) and Samuel Harmon. Bihler's was only a financial interest, selling the mill another 3,900 acres of timber in 1882. In 1872 the railroad line was extended from the mill five miles up the Gualala River into the woods, about as far as Annapolis Road ([Picture on page 38](#)). Initially the "train" was pulled by two draft horses, Tom and Jerry. Around 1878 four steam engines were acquired.

Take a walk up the path along the hedgerow. You will come to the visitor's center for Gualala Point Park ([V1 on Map 1, page 13](#)). If it's open, go inside and view a

very interesting exhibit of early logging tools, machinery and pictures. Then continue on to the [area marked V2 on Map 1](#). You will be rewarded with a beautiful view of the bend in the Gualala River as it emerges from the woods and heads toward the ocean. This was where the second mill was located.



Bourns Landing, pictured above, was about two miles north of the mill. The mill train would bring logs into the mill. After being converted into lumber products the trains would then carry the end product to Bourns Landing for shipping. Bourns was a slide or apron chute composed of an “A” frame supporting a wooden trough with cables. The chute had a movable plank at the end which was raised or lowered by a man using a lever either on the ship or on the chute. If you look closely at the picture above, you will see a man at the end of the chute. The movable plank was called a clapper and was intended to facilitate the hand loading of the cargo by a deckhand.



Above the doghole schooner "Gualala" loads lumber with another landing/loading method, the wire chute, referred to as loading "under the wire." Here a wire cable was run from shore to some type of anchorage beyond where the ship was moored. Cargo was strapped to the wire and the weight of the load would cause it to descend toward the ship. A braking mechanism would control the speed of the descent. Once unloaded on the ship or loaded with cargo for shore, a system of rope/wires and pulleys would return it to land.

WORLD WAR II PRACTICE BOMBING TARGET
35E-2, MAP 1, PAGE 13

Alameda Naval Air Station was the major Naval Air Center in the San Francisco Bay Area during World War II. It provided aviation support to all Naval activities in the area. Alameda commanded all Naval Auxiliary Air Stations (NAAS), one of which was Santa Rosa. NAAS Santa Rosa was commissioned on June 29, 1943. During World War II, 21 air squadrons of fighters, bombers and torpedo planes received their last training before combat at NAAS Santa Rosa. Part of that training was practice in dive-bombing, and sites were needed to carry this out.

The Navy identified the remote Ohlson sheep ranch in Sonoma County as one of these sites. The Ohlson family had acquired the property in 1941. The army had already established a radar base on their property a few miles south, and now the Ohlsons would provide 350 acres at the northern end of their ranch for the Navy's use. The only written documentation for the land's use, appears to be a lease prepared on April 3, 1946, and retroactively applied from May 2, 1945, to April 3, 1946. This appears to be supported by a military release document for the property indicating there was a "leasehold condemnation" superseded by a lease from 5/2/45 to 4/3/46.

The target was set up south of Gualala Point, a small point of land west of the northern end of Rock Cod Road on today's Sea Ranch. It is not the area owned by the county known as Gualala Point Park, although practice bombs, about eight inches long, were found

there during construction of the visitors' center. The target stood in the vicinity of the mound seen about 50 yards inland from this marker. Gualala Point Island, seen prominently rising out of the sea just off the coast, was used by pilots to identify the target area.



The practice bombs had a signal to indicate how close the pilot came to the target. The signals contained: “. . . a black powder expelling charge and a red phosphorous pyro-technic mixture.” (August 27, 2001, Army Corps of Engineers investigation-March 2002 report) Marker bombs were found in the general vicinity of this area during construction of houses. The Navy stopped using the target after April of 1946.

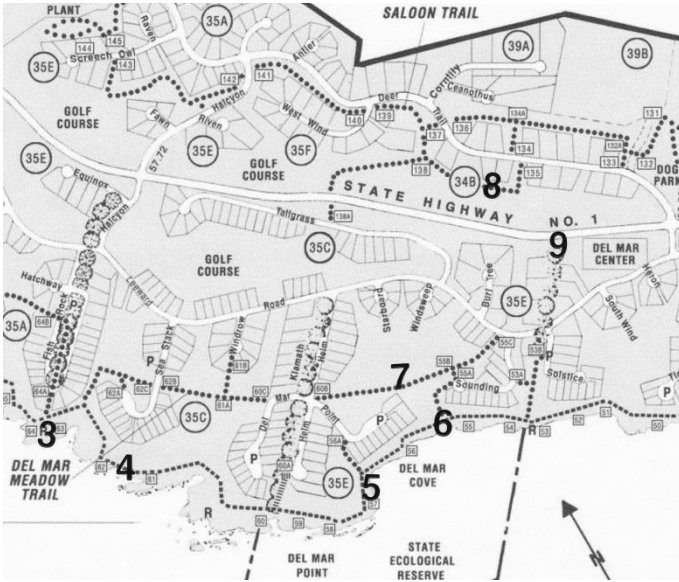
According to the last (August 27, 2001) visit by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, their risk assessment was: “Based on the documentation collected to compile the Preliminary Assessment for this site, which includes a map and correspondence, it is clear that the property was used for bombing practice during the period of 1944 to 1946. Although the area is utilized for recreational purposes and contains a number of

residences in proximity to the former target area, there is no clear evidence that there is a risk of unexploded ordnance in the area. Documentation, interviews, and the results of the site visits show no remaining evidence of Department of Defense activity.”

The following 1947 aerial photo by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers shows the target area. The long light area may have represented the approach to the target taken by pilots, but no information has been developed to confirm this. The target mound is at the north end of this swath that begins on its south end at Salal Creek. The conclusion of the 2001 investigation mentioned above was that this mound was the most likely target site. The Gualala River bend is in the top middle of the photo. The Gualala Point Regional Park’s Visitors Center would be at the river’s end of the second hedgerow from the top.



MAP 2



Please note that location 9, the Del Mar Store Warehouse, is not on a trail, but is accessed by walking along the west side of the Del Mar tennis courts. From the parking lot, walk up the embankment, at the west side. Once on top you will see the marker directly ahead at the north end of the tennis courts.

VICINITY OF TONGUE LANDING
AND RUTHERFORD DAIRY
35A-3, MAP 2, PAGE 22

When ownership of various parts of the German Rancho Mexican land grants came into question and before the ownership issues were settled, squatters began settling on the land, especially the northern end. German Rancho owner William Bihler's concern about this led him to try selling the northern acreage. The 160 acres encompassing the Del Mar area today was sold to John Clary. The St. Ores brothers, George, Lewis and Albert, were leased parts of the property. By 1870 Clary had defaulted and the St. Ores brothers lost interest in the area. Bihler, once again, had the property.

Robert H. Rutherford emigrated from Canada in 1864 at about age 21, finding his way to the north coast, where, in 1873, he bought from Bihler the 160 acres previously occupied by John Clary. He married in 1879, established a home, family and dairy. By 1880 he was growing 10 acres of hay, had several horses, 110 cows for milking, 44 other head of cattle, 46 pigs and 30 chickens. Besides milk, he produced 2,000 pounds of butter and a large number of eggs, certainly selling what his family didn't need. He built a home in the vicinity of Halcyon and Deer Trail. He had orchards between the home site and today's highway. He constructed a dairy barn ([pictured next page](#)) about where Halcyon and Equinox intersect on the northwest corner. It was similar to the Knipp-Stengel barn but two-thirds the size and perpendicular to the highway. He bought from Bihler the 825 acres north of the initial 160, but ran into difficulty paying the mortgage for all of it.



Rutherford tried to raise money renting some of the property to Joseph Tongue, who raised fruit and grain. As a teenager, Joe Tongue emigrated from England to New York in 1864. He may have lived in Canada for awhile, coming to San Francisco in 1880, where he was naturalized, and moving to Gualala the same year. He continued to live in Gualala while farming the northern acreage of the German Rancho. During this time he also served as Gualala Postmaster, being appointed in 1890. He married in 1889, but the 1900 census showed no wife living with him, although it indicated he was still married. Tongue, whose name is associated with the dairy barn, as was Rutherford's, added a landing to ship his grain. Although a picture ([below](#)) exists, and the landing was said to have been directly behind the barn on the bluff, no evidence has been found of its actual site. It apparently didn't survive long because it was in a poor location.



Robert Rutherford was never able to raise enough money to pay off the mortgage, and a Santa Rosa Bank officer bought the property at auction in 1894. Rutherford moved to Petaluma, then to Bodega, where he grew fruit. In 1898 the bank officer who owned the land leased it to Valentine Foresti and Louis Filosi, both dairymen. Filosi, from Switzerland, lived alone in a small house, possibly the one vacated by John Clary. Italian born Foresti had a wife and three children. Most likely they lived in the home vacated by Rutherford. Other Italian immigrants joined him and helped run the dairy. By the end of the 19th century it is believed Joe Tongue had left the German Rancho and was farming his own property that he owned free of a mortgage around Gualala.

RUSSIAN COLONY
35C-4, MAP 2, PAGE 22

When Emil Noshkin and his wife Mary arrived in the United States in 1912, they had 11 children and 12 pieces of luggage. Emil's original plans were to establish himself as a flour manufacturer, as he had been in Russia. He probably altered his plans upon hearing of large tracts of land available for farming and ranching. As with the Germans in the 19th century, this opportunity to create a community where they could continue their customs, language, and religious beliefs unfettered by the interference of others, was too good to let go. He mobilized a large group of Russians in San Francisco, and they began their search. The search shortly led Emil to strike a deal with Walter Frick. Frick had purchased 5,000 acres of property at a bargain price from the Bender Brothers' receivers, ([see page 32](#)), when he learned that a group of Russian immigrants was seeking property. The agreement seemed doomed to fail from the outset. A September 6, 1913 article in the Mendocino Beacon commented: "Northern Sonoma county people wonder how the colonists ever came to promise to give a quarter of a million dollars for that nine mile tract below the Gualala River."

Nevertheless the deal was struck and on August 31, 1912, the Mendocino Beacon reported: "The Sea Foam . . . brought up 29 families of colonists to Point Arena. They are Russian colonists who have secured a big tract of land at Delmar, Sonoma County, and will settle there. Some 200 more families are expected to follow those who came up this week."

Tragedy struck the group shortly after they arrived. They had ordered two steam tractor engines. The group was notified of the delivery to the Point Arena dock. Emil sent Nicholas Podsakoff and two other men to drive one of them down the coast to Del Mar. A September 14th, 1912, Mendocino Beacon article described what happened. "In the Beacon of February 17th attention was called to the unsafe condition of the oft-repaired bridge across Schooner Gulch creek. [T]he colonists were warned . . . against making the trip south from Point Arena with such a heavy machine over the light bridges of that section, but they proceeded regardless of this warning." At Schooner Gulch, "When the engine was about to proceed on the bridge, [Podsakoff] was warned by the engineer of the machine not to proceed across the bridge with the engine, but in spite of this admonition he deliberately walked alongside of it as it moved across the structure. [W]hen the structure collapsed under the weight of the engine . . . he was crushed between the timbers of the falling bridge and the tender of [the] traction engine."

Podsakoff was buried at Del Mar and the stalwart colonists pushed on with the establishment of their community. "A progressive spirit has been shown, as modern farming methods are being employed in every channel possible. Among other implements two traction gang plows have been purchased being the first in this section of the county. General farming, including the growing of cereals, fruits and potatoes, will prove the principal occupation, while dairying will follow a close second. One thousand acres has been set aside by the colonists on which to grow potatoes next year." (October 26, 1912, San Francisco Call)

It must have been quite exciting for people who had lived in the area for a long time to first witness the steam traction engines with gang plows. The large, awkward machines lumbered up and down the coastline meadows, belching dark black smoke and making a loud, gasping noise, that at times caused one to wonder if they could go on much further. There would be an engineer driving it with two or three men around the tender making sure the monster's furnace was fed. Attached to the back of it would be the gang plow with its disks, carrying several men standing on it to force the disks into the coastal soil. Things were progressing well for the 22 families living at Del Mar. For Emil Noshkin and his family the American Dream was coming together. Then it all began to unravel when the settlers were unable to pay the mortgage. After defaulting, Noshkin and his group returned to San Francisco and pressed on with their lives. He lived another 40 years engaged in other successful occupations and surrounded by his family.



DEL MAR LANDING AND LUMBER MILL
35E-5 MAP 2, PAGE 22

Brothers William and George Bender of San Francisco formed a partnership in 1886 to conduct business as wholesale and retail dealers of wood and brick. It wasn't long before they got involved with logging activities on the Sonoma/Mendocino coast, having acquired a schooner, aptly named "Bender Brothers," (pictured on cover), to facilitate the venture. They evolved into commission merchants/wholesale dealers of railroad ties, tan bark, telegraph poles and all kinds of split timber. They made frequent stops at most of the landings along the Sonoma and Mendocino coasts from Fisk's Mill to Mendocino. They appeared to have grandiose ideas of becoming timber barons. They entered into contracts with the Gualala Mill Company to work their property for the "split timber" products (railroad ties, fence posts, shingles, firewood etc.). This occurred in 1897 and 1898 along Rockpile, Buckeye, and Pepperwood creeks, running east from the south fork of the Gualala River. They were required to ship the goods out of the woods on Gualala Mill's railroad north to Bourn's Landing (See picture on page 69).

When the Bender Brothers began operating at Del Mar is unclear. They didn't buy the land where the mill and landing were located until 1904. However, some oral history indicates the sawmill and landing had been constructed by the Benders in 1901 or 1902. Some suggest they were operating the mill as early as 1898. The landing is marked today by a wood beam jutting out to sea. The landing made use of a wire "chute"

(described on page 18) shown in an actual photograph of Del Mar Landing below.



1903 was a year of change for our coastal community. Knipp and Stengel, after 40 years of running the German Rancho, were tired. Adam Knipp gave his longtime partner a power of attorney and moved back to Baltimore. The year before, they had decided to close down Black Point Landing. The owners of the Gualala Mill were also ready to retire. They sold the mill in 1903 to an out of state company. The new owners shortly thereafter cancelled the contracts previously made with the Benders. Undaunted by this setback, the brothers purchased 600+ acres from Stengel in November 1903, then followed this action by buying the balance of the Knipp-Stengel ranch. Concluding their rush to be timber barons, in February 1904, they acquired the northernmost 985 acres on which the mill, landing and logging community were located. They had reunited all the acreage that would eventually become Sea Ranch, but they also overextended themselves. In July they went into receivership with a court order that they cease operations.

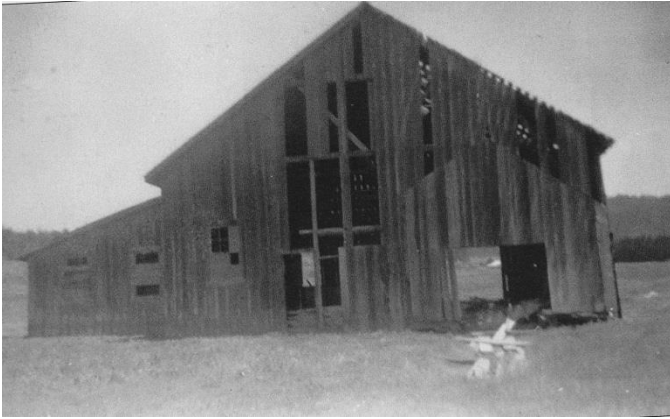
As you look across the cove, try to identify a mound at the bluff's edge, in front of the line of houses. The mound is where the steam powerhouse stood. It provided the power for the mill that was to the east of it. The picture shows the powerhouse with its two smoke stacks and the mill next to it. To continue with the mill's story after the Bender Brothers, proceed along the bluff trail to marker 35E-6.



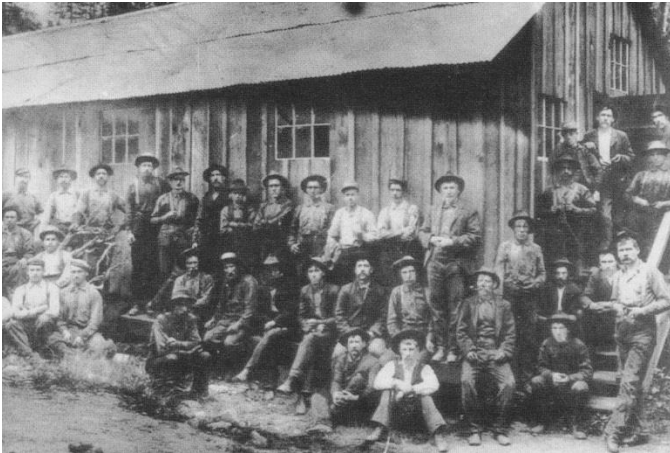
MILL BUILDINGS
35E-6, MAP 2, PAGE 22

Del Mar became a center of activity even after the Bender Brothers' financial problems. The receivers brought in Frank Glynn and Hans Petersen to oversee the lumber operation. In the 1910 census, Glynn was noted as lumberyard manager and Petersen as tie camp manager. Most of what was being brought from the woods was used to make railroad ties, fence posts, shakes, shingles and cordwood. There was also bark stripped from tanoak trees for use in the tanning industry. Much of the population involved in these businesses was found in "tie camps" and "bark camps." The operation also owned what had been the Knipp-Stengel ranch, which supplied them beef and continued to provide beef to the Gualala mill just north of Del Mar in Mendocino County until it burned to the ground in 1906. After the fire many of the Gualala mill workers transferred to Del Mar. The population of the future Sea Ranch increased from 75 to 145 people between 1900 and 1910. Previous Gualala mill workers "commuted" from the Gualala area, others from Annapolis. The lumber mill and its steam power house stood along the bluff where the line of homes now stands just north of this marker. Buildings such as a machine shop and a cookhouse ([pictured next page](#)) were built in the meadow to the east of this marker. There was also a bunkhouse for single men and "commuters" from Gualala and Annapolis. Families used cabins in the meadow to the northeast of the mill.

Remnants of Del Mar machine shop in 1941.



Mill workers in front of Del Mar cookhouse.



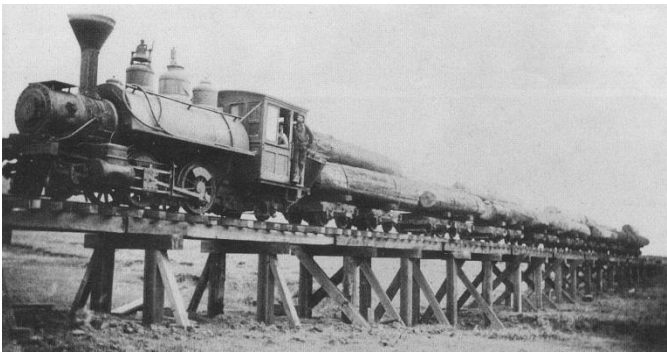
MILL RAILROAD AND WORKER HOUSING
35E-7 MAP 2, PAGE 22

Looking toward the northeast corner of the meadow one sees two cul-de-sacs, named Starboard and Windsweep running west off Leeward. In this vicinity, cabins were built for mill worker families. The mill constructed a saloon and store for the Del Mar lumber community. If one looks toward the highway along the raised mound in the meadow, the approximate locations of these two structures may be identified. Picture the saloon directly across from where the raised mound would intersect the highway on the east side. The store would be on the west side diagonally across the highway but a little further south. The raised mound on which you stand has been the subject of much discussion. Some think it was part of the railroad, possibly a spur that ran up into the woods. Others suggest it may have been put in by The Sea Ranch developers for some reason, like drainage. Yet others believe it was what was known as "Wrangle Road," the road that ran from the mill to the saloon. Legend has it the road's name came from the women quarreling about the men heading for the saloon at day's end. More on the saloon and store can be found at marker 34B-8 on the Saloon Trail.

Railroads came to the area solely in response to the need for logging companies to have an easier method to haul huge logs from the woods to the mill. The Gualala Mill was the first in the area, using two draft horses, Tom and Jerry, to pull the cars, but by 1878 they brought in their first locomotive. A second arrived in 1884, then two more by the end of the decade. Bridges

were built for the train and rebuilt after they were washed away by the winter rains.

Exactly when the railroad on Del Mar was built is not certain, but it appears to have been in place when the Bender Brothers went into receivership. The managers appointed by the receivers made good use of it, running spur lines up ravines and to the edge of the forest in open areas. The tracks for these spurs were portable, so they could be moved as logging was completed in one area and begun in another. The main line ran diagonally across this meadow from the landing/mill sites along the bluff to Leeward Road and on south. It terminated on the north side of the Knipp-Stengel barn.



Trestles were used through parts of the meadows. Ironically, the locomotive was thought to have sparked the fire that destroyed the Del Mar Mill in 1910.

DEL MAR SALOON AND STORE
34B-8, MAP 2, PAGE 22

“A logger’s . . . spare time pursuits were elemental: roughhousing, drinking, gambling, womanizing . . . Booze was the breath of life to him . . . ” (The Loggers, Time-Life Books, NY, 1976). No picture of the saloon exists, but one might imagine what it looked like, by viewing the one at Stewarts Point below.



The structure would have been along today’s highway on the eastern side, and its demise was possibly a victim of highway widening. The saloon was a man’s refuge. Legend has it when the mill closed for the day, the men would trek up to the saloon along a well-worn path called Wrangle Road, while the women angrily and noisily protested the daily ritual.

The saloon building was put to a more socially acceptable use by the Russian colony (see page 26) during their brief time here in 1912 and 1913. They converted it to a schoolhouse, since the Del Mar Schoolhouse was too small for the number of children they had. The Russians called it Sacel School. The teacher was Elizabeth Briggs from Santa Rosa. She was paid \$75 a month. Teachers at this time were usually

young, single women. Some schools required them to resign if they got married. However, Elizabeth was 40 years old and married. The school district may have overlooked this issue because Elizabeth spoke Russian, no doubt the result of her mother being born in Russia. A February 5, 1913, Santa Rosa Republican newspaper reported: "An old saloon has been remodeled into a temporary school house at which 19 children attend in the day time. Mr. and Mrs. Briggs also teach a night school, to which many of the older people go. There are thirteen going to the night school. The younger children learn quite rapidly and several of them can now read quite a bit of English and can make their wants understood in that language. [M]r. Briggs (Elizabeth's husband) was appointed a deputy by Sheriff J. K. Smith and will look after the peace and quiet of the colony."

The Del Mar Store was on the west side of the roadway a little further south than the saloon. It is pictured



about 1909. The man in the suit and hat is Frank Glynn. He, together with Hans Petersen, ran the mill. They had been appointed to do so by the Bender Brothers' receivers. The store sold all manner of staples: soap, butter, eggs, clothing, shoes, tools, etc. They could have sold seed to the farmers and taken in meat and milk from the ranches and dairies.

The picture suggests another purpose the store served. The general store in most towns at that time was a gathering place for people to socialize. It's interesting to note the telephone sign hanging on the store, indicating the area had telephone service, possibly only available at the store. The flags on the entrance awning may tell us the time of year is around July 4th.



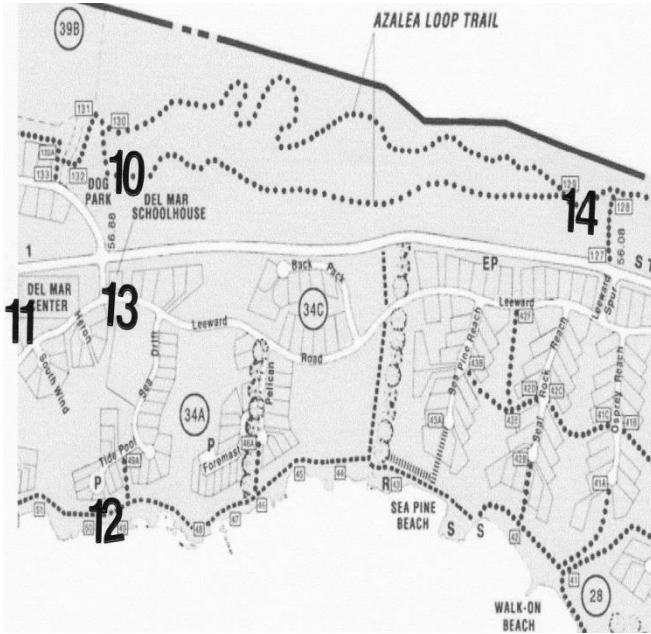
A Gualala logging crew, being transported into or back from the woods, most likely along the Gualala River.

DEL MAR STORE WAREHOUSE
35E-9, MAP 2, PAGE 22

This building, minus the northern section with the sloping roof, was believed to have been used as a warehouse for the Del Mar Store. The Del Mar Store supplied businesses and homes not only at Del Mar but the surrounding area as well, so a warehouse may have been a necessity. The sloped roof addition appears to have been added to house larger animals, perhaps oxen. The southern section may have functioned as a chicken house in later years. A large number of glass jars have been found in this structure. Most of them are S & W Coffee jars. The jars were made by the Hazel-Atlas Glass Company in Oakland. The company got their silica from the old coal mines of Nortonville and Somersville, historic areas in east Contra Costa County. The location of these mines is in Black Diamond Mines Regional Park, where one of them can be toured. The company insignia on these jars was used from 1923 to 1964, but the Oakland plant closed in 1949. Therefore, these jars were probably manufactured between 1923 and 1949. Walter Frick and his estate owned the property during the years from 1923 to 1941, when the Ohlson family purchased it.

In 2012 the building was freed from the vegetation that had enveloped it and a large tree removed after a part of it fell on the roof. Now the structure, exposed to the elements, is in danger of complete collapse. There has been some discussion about trying to preserve what's left, but nothing has yet been proposed.

MAP 3



Del Mar Ravine Bridge Remnants



DEL MAR RAVINE
39B-10, MAP 3, PAGE 40

Where you see a river like the Gualala running toward the ocean, or a ravine carved by running water as it makes its way to the sea, it's almost a certainty logging was conducted up the hillsides bordering these geographic features. These were the areas where early loggers began their operations. They would start their cutting on the trees closest to the ocean and nearest the bottom of these gullies and valleys, using the water or other means to move the logs close to the mill. In the ravines without enough water, logging roads or skid roads would be built. Skid roads were created by laying logs in trenches, side by side as if they were laying railroad tracks, filling in dirt between the logs so their horses or oxen teams would be able to walk as they dragged logs out of the woods. Water from the ravine streams or other type of lubricant would be used to moisten the logs, making the pulling easier. Tree cutting was indiscriminate as they moved up the hillsides, clearing all trees in their path.



Later, portable steam engines called donkey engines ([pictured above](#)) were used to pull the logs out. The oxen didn't completely disappear, however. They still proved useful in areas where it was not practical to use the steam donkey.

Del Mar Ravine is one of the largest ravines on Sea Ranch. About 50 yards east of the highway, a barn was located to house the oxen that pulled logs out of the woods. The barn appears on the [1904 map on page 52](#), along the creek on the east side of the county road. Up close to the highway, Walter Frick had a garage where he stored his Pierce Arrow. The 1941 photo shows the



garage in the foreground and the bull barn in the back. No remains of the garage exist and the bull barn is just a pile of rubble now, a victim of time and neglect.

There were also logging and/or farm bridges across the stream. Some remnants of these bridges may still exist, but finding them is difficult because of the overgrowth. The [picture on page 40](#) shows one hidden in the dense vegetation of the ravine.

OHLSON RANCH HOUSE AND BARN
35E-11, MAP 3, PAGE 40

Walter Frick died in 1937. Because his estate was a complicated one, it wasn't until 1941 that his Del Mar property was auctioned off. The only bidder was the Ohlson family. The four brothers paid \$100,000 for the approximately 5,000 acres and another \$25,000 for the sheep. (The Del Mar Ranch by Susan Clark, 1990) The Ohlsons were sheep ranchers from Annapolis, where their parents had settled in 1889.

The Del Mar Center is located in the house Ed Ohlson built for his family in 1952. Prior to that they lived in a house with an extensive history. This structure had been located where the separate bathroom building is now. The picture shows the two houses before the old one (on the right) was torn down.



The old house was originally used by the foreman of the Del Mar Mill. It was thought to have been a combination of earlier structures, perhaps those used by John Clary around 1860. The Russian colony probably

used this structure as they did other structures left after the mill closed. Walter Frick, once he re-acquired the property from the Russians, transformed it into the summer cottage pictured below for his family. Frick also built other structures around it: like a guest house, a garage, probably some barns, and a tennis court. The tennis court was located in the parking lot area just west of where you're standing, surrounded by tall trees, many of which are still before you. There is also a stone well tucked back in the southeast corner of the yard that dates from around 1898. The well is on the Sonoma County landmarks list.



After the Ohlsons purchased the property, Ed Ohlson, his wife Alice, and their children Russell and Patricia, moved into Frick's cottage. Ed's brother Chester also moved in with them. Brother Elmer moved into the ranch foreman's house ([pictured on page 64](#)) built by Frick and located south of the Knipp-Stengel barn. The fourth brother Ernie stayed in Annapolis and ran the original family operation there. The larger of the two structures along Leeward Road is a barn believed to

have been built by the Ohlsons in the 1940s. The smaller building north of the barn appears to have been for poultry and may have been built earlier. The Ohlsons continued for more than two decades very successfully operating their sheep ranch and living on the property. It would appear it was a peaceful existence except for the military intrusions caused by World War II.

Take a walk through the beautiful gardens surrounding the house, visit the well tucked back in the southeast corner, and check out the stone wall shown in the family picture below.



Then visit the Ohlson ranch house and find the brick with 1861 printed on it. Speculation is that it may have been from the original house in which John Clary lived ([see page 23](#)).

SITE OF KLAMATH SINKING
34A-12, MAP 3, PAGE 40

The Klamath was a merchant steam vessel. It was built in Fairhaven, California, for the McCormick Steamship Company. It was 1,083 tons, 201.5 feet long, and 41.6 feet wide. It carried merchandise, often lumber, and passengers. The Klamath could haul 1,200,000 feet of lumber and had accommodations for sixty passengers. The Klamath made stops from San Pedro to the Columbia River area of Washington, including stops at Cape Mendocino and Portland. Captain Thomas Jamieson took over the Klamath in 1918, and as the steamship left San Francisco for Portland on February 4, 1921, with cargo, 19 passengers, and a crew of 34, Jamieson was at the helm.

February, by many considered the worst month for weather on the north coast, delivered some of its worst that night. Captain Jamieson left his mate to carry on alone and went below to rest. Within two hours of departing San Francisco, winds had increased to 75 miles per hour, causing the ship to struggle against them. A heavy rainstorm reduced visibility considerably. Breakers were seen too late, and the ship hit the rocks. Jamieson, upon coming on the bridge, realized the ship was off course. He gave orders to pull the ship back, but the action caused the vessel to hit more rocks, destroying its propeller and shaft.

The captain decided the ship couldn't be saved, so he called crew and passengers on deck. Apparently he decided against life boats. "Often . . . a dangerous surf is running which is not perceptible four hundred yards off

shore, and the surf, when viewed from a vessel, never appears as dangerous as it is. Many lives have unnecessarily been lost by the crews of stranded vessels being thus deceived and attempting to land in the ship's boats. Circumstances may arise, owing to the strength of the current . . . or the danger of the wreck breaking up immediately. . . . [In] such a case a breeches-buoy or life-car will be hauled off instead . . . and you will be hauled ashore through the surf." (1889 Coast Pilot)

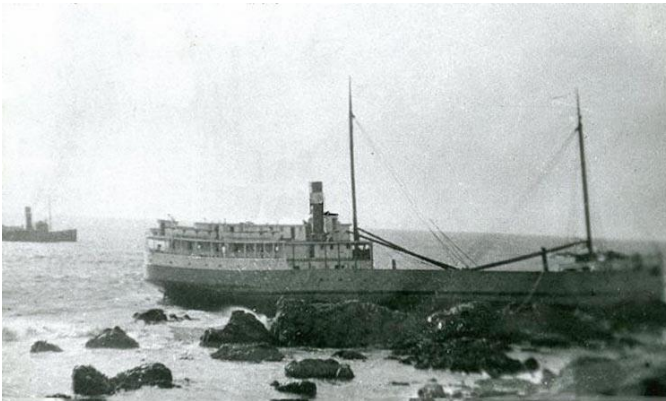


Feb 1921 *Klamath* on the rocks at Del Mar and meadows

An SOS was sent and picked up by the Curacao and the Everett, but upon arriving they could do nothing and sat by helplessly. Seaman Charles Svenson took the line for the breeches buoy ashore. After rigging it up, passengers and crew were brought ashore. A problem arose with a baby, Phil Buckley. It was resolved by putting the infant in a garbage can and tying the can to the back of another seaman, who then brought the boy ashore in that manner. All aboard were saved. The Klamath itself wasn't so lucky. Attempts to free it failed. Salvage crews took what they could and the ocean took the rest.



Marion Philbert, who apparently worked for Walter Frick, Philbert's wife, and four children, were there when the grounding occurred and did what they could to comfort the passengers until help arrived for them.



Approximate 1921 view from the current historical marker.

DEL MAR SCHOOLHOUSE
[34A-13, MAP 3, PAGE 40](#)

Although a school for only a brief period, the Del Mar Schoolhouse building transcended the ravages of time by serving multiple purposes. William and George Bender established a lumber mill along the ocean bluff to the northwest of the schoolhouse around 1900, overextending themselves buying property and going into receivership in 1904. The receivers of the property appointed others to run the mill while a buyer for the property was sought. A community had grown around the mill, and there were enough children to request the county to provide a school. The schoolhouse originally was one room, 16 feet by 20 feet. It's shown on the [1904 map on page 52](#) along the creek south of three other buildings where the Del Mar Center is today. It faced the county road, now Highway 1. Today, the front, which was an addition to the original building, faces Leeward Road. In the fall of 1905 the new teacher, Edith Ames, welcomed the students.

The mill burned in the summer of 1910, and people from the community began moving elsewhere. By 1912 there were not enough students for the county to keep the school open. In that same year, the Bender Brothers' receivers found a buyer for the property in real estate investor Walter Frick. Frick leased the property to a group of Russian Baptists, who accomplished a great deal in

developing an agricultural community in the short time they occupied the property. They had too many children for the small school building. Instead, they used the former saloon. It is assumed the old school was used as a house, as were many of the abandoned lumber mill family cabins. Unfortunately, the Russians contracted to purchase the acreage at several times the value of the property, defaulted and left the property in late 1913. Frick again took possession.

Frick planted the hedgerows and introduced sheep on the ranch. A ranch hand for Frick, named Morris, was the next occupant of the former schoolhouse. He built the western addition to the schoolhouse that provided a kitchen and a storage area or possibly a bedroom. He built a wall in the schoolhouse portion to create another bedroom and perhaps a living area. After Morris, the structure became a bunkhouse of sorts for sheep shearing crews who visited the property twice a year. The building deteriorated, eventually becoming uninhabitable. It became a storehouse for wool. The Ohlson family, sheep ranchers from Annapolis, bought the land from Frick's estate in 1941. The schoolhouse was in a dilapidated condition by the mid-sixties when Oceanic Inc., developer of The Sea Ranch, purchased the property from the Ohlsons. Unfortunately, the building stayed neglected for the next 20 years.

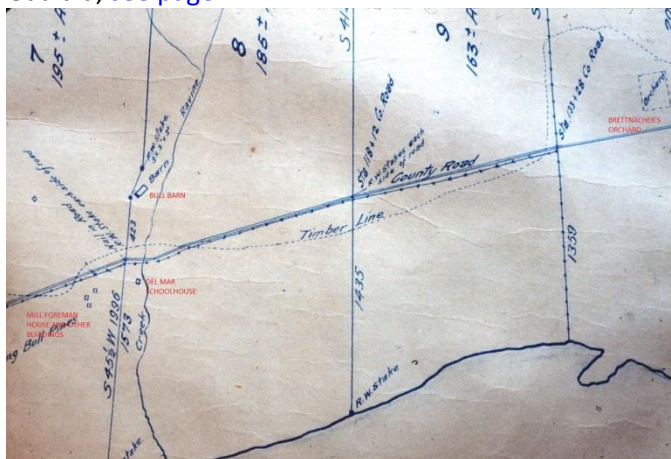
In 1983 a volunteer group was formed to identify and preserve historic buildings. The schoolhouse, here pictured in 1978 was the first project.



The building was stabilized and a glen south of it cleared. The glen became known as the “Secret Place.” Around 1987 the playhouse Walter Frick built for his children in the early 1920s was moved to the northwest corner of the site and repaired. By 1998 it was obvious a much more drastic effort was needed to preserve the beloved school house. Volunteers again answered the call. The result is a marvelous example of what a community can accomplish when it recognizes the value of preserving historical resources connecting it to its past. The Del Mar Schoolhouse is on the Sonoma County landmarks list.

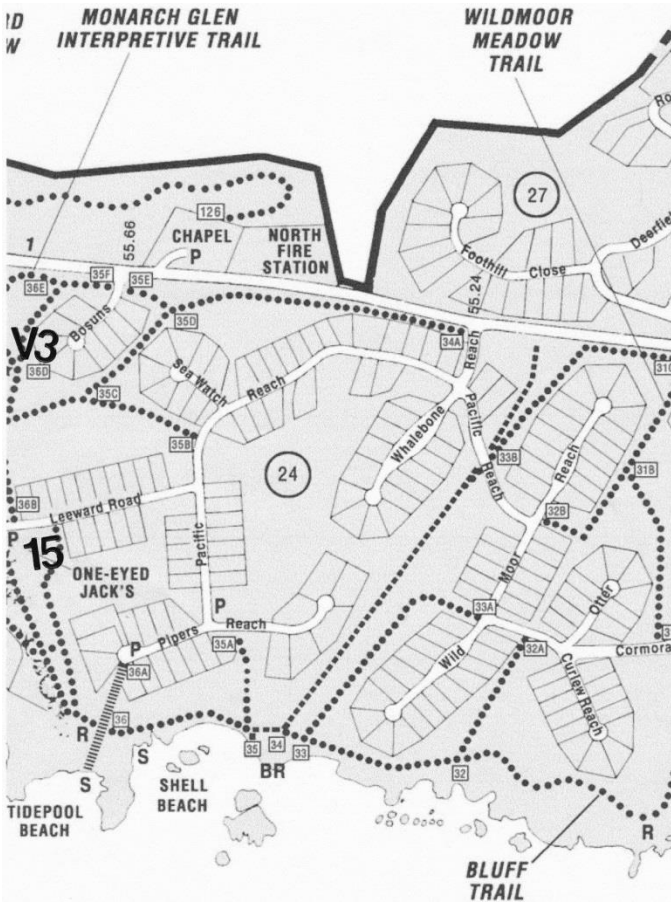
BRETTNACHER HOME AND ORCHARD SITE
39B-14, MAP 3, PAGE 40

In the mid-1860s, William Bihler sold Nicholas Brettnacher, a fellow German, 100 acres spanning both sides of today's Highway 1 at Leeward Spur. The 1870 census shows no dairy or stock cattle, so Brettnacher didn't become a rancher like his neighbors. He grew potatoes and hay, apparently began an orchard, and built a home. He had a miller, a farm laborer and a cook in his employ in 1870, so it would appear he had some ambitious plans. What happened to them is unknown. By 1875 he had sold the property to Gualala citizen and prominent businessman Cyrus Robinson. Robinson never lived on the property but did maintain Brettnacher's orchard. The only reminders today of the area's activities are the two orchard remnants keeping each other company in the open meadow. For more on Cyrus Robinson, considered the founding father of Gualala, [see page 14](#).



1904 map shows Brettnacher's orchard in upper right hand corner. Creek on left runs through Del Mar Ravine.

MAP 4



WALTER FRICK ERA
24-15, MAP 4, PAGE 53

Walter Frick was an ambitious, astute, and perhaps ruthless businessman. He was born in 1875 and moved to Placerville, California, when he was only 18, holding jobs in the mining and timber industries. He began purchasing small timber parcels, combining them and then reselling the acreage to large lumber companies. His aggressive, opportunistic pursuit of real estate made him wealthy at a young age. By 1906 he had moved to the Bay Area, living and working primarily in Oakland. He continued making real estate deals, increasing his wealth. His largest deal involved the land that would ultimately become a major part of Mt. Diablo State Park. Second to that would be his April 16, 1912, acquisition of the Del Mar Rancho on the northern Sonoma coast. Frick formed a business relationship with another powerful real estate mogul of the time named R. N. Burgess. Burgess had offices in San Francisco.

Four months after Frick bought the Sonoma rancho, he and Burgess set up Del Mar Development Company to manage, subdivide it and sell it. Frick was president of the company, R.H. Miller was secretary and Burgess was involved at some level and recorded the transfer. In August, a mortgage was taken out on the property with Western Mortgage and Guaranty Company, which included Frick, Burgess and Miller on its board of directors and, Burgess as president.

Around this same period of time Frick became aware of a group of Russians led by Emil Noshkin looking for a

large tract of land on which to establish a settlement. The original arrangements made with Emil Noshkin are unclear. Perhaps it was a lease giving him the option to buy. In any case, on January 31, 1913, Emil and Mary Noshkin, his wife, signed an agreement to buy the property for \$250,755. The terms included assuming the mortgage taken out with Western Mortgage and a second mortgage held by a major stockholder of Del Mar Development. The fact that the sale price was six times the assessed value raises questions about whether or not Frick was taking advantage of the Noshkins. Still, it had been advertised for sale at \$50 an acre, which comes out to about the amount agreed upon. It's hard to believe there was equal bargaining power between the Noshkins and the Frick-Burgess-Miller alliance. Further, when the Del Mar Ranch was sold in 1941 to the Ohlson family by the Frick estate, the cost was around \$125,000.

The success of the Russian Colony was astounding considering the short period of time they were at Del Mar. They created homes for their families and prepared land for crops so they could feed themselves. They established good relations with their neighbors, established a church, and began a school not only for their children but so that adults could better themselves as well. For Noshkin and the colonists, the terms of the purchase for the first five months were manageable, but became progressively more challenging. Despite their efforts, the colonists could not make the payments.

The Noshkins and the other Russian colonists returned to Potrero Hill in San Francisco, where non-Orthodox

Russians tended to settle. Through a series of inexplicable transactions over the next couple of years the property eventually ended up being owned by Walter Frick individually. He planted the hedgerows, attempted to again sell small parcels and finally settled for introducing sheep to the property.



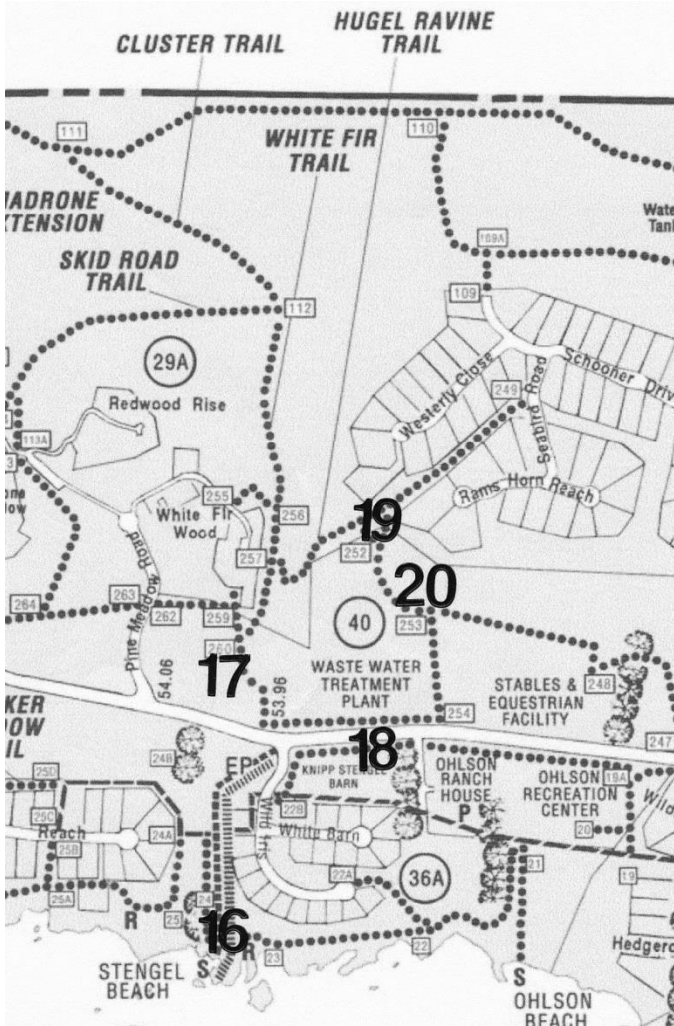
Frick did have some positive contributions to the development of the property. First of all, he initiated the planting of our hedgerows between 1916 and 1927. Today they are as much a part of Sea Ranch as the ram's head logo and our architectural achievements. Secondly, between 1916 and 1921, working with the University of California at Davis, he introduced sheep, anticipating more profits from them than cattle. Finally, although he tried to break it up, in the end he kept the property together as did the Ohlson family, who purchased it from his estate.

In front of you is “One Eyed Jack’s Cabin,” an example of a sheepherder’s cabin that existed around the property. The picture shows the sheep shed that once sat opposite the cabin where the petanque court is now.



Across the street the path on the south side of the hedgerow leads you on the Monarch Glen Interpretive Trail. Check for a trail guide before you cross the bridge that you will come to on your left ([V3 on map 4, page 53](#)). Look for posts with numbers. Site 10 brings you to a salt block shed and 13 is the sheep pens/lambing sheds. Look on the side of the sheds for an explanation of the maze of fences. Crossing a second bridge by the highway brings you to a huge fallen redwood at number 16, which has re-sprouted. After this you come to a fork. Go right to number 23 and you’ll see a tanoak. Loggers would peel the bark off these trees and sell it to tanneries for use in the tanning process. Go back up this side trail to the fork and go left. Look off to your left and you will see a depression that is an old farming road. Where the depression crosses the creek there are remnants of an old bridge.

MAP 5



ORIGINAL SETTLEMENT
THE RANCHING ERA BEGINS
36A-16, MAP 5, PAGE 58

Looking east from this marker, up on the ridge there is a prominent grove of eucalyptus trees. Eucalyptus trees are not native to California. They were imported in the mid-19th century from Australia. They grow quickly and the hope was that they would be a good tree for construction timber. Although that was not the case, the trees did, however, prove beneficial as windbreaks and for firewood. Today when you see a eucalyptus stand, it often means a home or settlement at one time existed at that location.

Just north of those trees is where Frederick Hugal built a cabin in 1845, becoming the first European to establish a homestead on the German Rancho, later The Sea Ranch. This preceded the date he and his partners actually received the land grant. There were also several Indian huts. No doubt the Native Americans worked on the German Rancho performing tasks similar to those they were carrying out at Fort Ross. Henry Hegeler was with Hugal during this early period. They started out with 400 head of cattle and horses brought from Fort Ross. Hugal fenced the area from about 1.25 miles south of the huge white barn on the knoll to about 1.25 miles north of the barn for cattle. They managed to double the number of livestock and planted 40 acres of grain. The first barn/warehouse structure was constructed in the level area northwest of today's Knipp-Stengel barn and much closer to the bluff in the vicinity of this marker.

Large Sonoma County landowner William Bihler became owner of the German Rancho in 1855. He brought his nephew Christian Stengel and horseman Adam Knipp from Baltimore in 1857 to help him run his large ranch, which encompassed the property which is now The Sea Ranch. Knipp and Stengel built the large white barn prominently seen today in the 1880s, along with other buildings, as the area began dairy farming. The barn is on the National Register of Historic Places and the Sonoma County landmark list. For themselves, they built a large two story white house (pictured below) north of the eucalyptus grove on the ridge.



LOGGER CABINS SITE
29A-17, MAP 5, PAGE 58

To the immediate south is Hugal's Ravine. It was named for Frederick Hugal, the first European settler here in 1845. Hugal and partner Henry Hegeler built some type of grist mill in this general area. Cattle were butchered in the ravine before delivery of the meat to the logging mills and local settlements. It is also the site that was last logged on the German Rancho. Loggers' cabins sat in the flat area below and perhaps, above this site.



Across the highway, below the knoll on which the barn sits, is where the Del Mar logging train terminated. Spur tracks ran up the ravine to where the logs were gathered after being pulled out of the woods by oxen teams ([picture on page 78](#)) or steam donkeys ([pictured on page 70](#)). Logs were pulled from two ravines here. At trail post 257 due east from 260 you will see where they intersect. Hugal goes to the right and White Fir to the left.

CATTLE RANCHING ERA
36A-18, MAP 5, PAGE 58

William Bihler was a dynamic, driven individual. He arrived in Baltimore with his family from Germany when he was 10 years old. He learned to be a butcher when he was very young. He was lured to California at age 20 by the stories of gold, but instead of the gold fields, he remained in San Francisco, becoming a very successful butcher. He sold his meats at exorbitant prices to the gold miners. Initially he bought from a major cattleman, but then decided to eliminate these middlemen and raise his own cattle. He partnered with Charles Wagner, another San Francisco butcher, and began buying land. First they bought in the Schellville area southeast of the town of Sonoma around 1853. Two years later they bought the Huichita Rancho along Huichita Creek in Napa County, just east of Schellville. This was the same year they purchased the German Rancho. Wagner handled the wholesale meat business in San Francisco, and Bihler did the cattle raising.

He set about improving the stock of cattle on the German Rancho, doing much of the labor himself rather than leaving it all to the Native American workforce. He imported quality stock and personally managed its growth. He, like his predecessors, made his home on the ridge north of the eucalyptus crown. Bihler also had an interest in raising horses. In 1857 or 1858 he imported from England a draught stallion called "Young England's Glory." To bring his acquisition to California from Baltimore, he hired horseman Adam Knipp. In 1857 he also bought out his partner, Wagner. Wagner

continued on in San Francisco as a wholesale butcher with his former partner being a major supplier.

About this time Bihler began to realize his ranching empire was getting too big for him and he needed to find people he could trust. He turned to his Baltimore nephews: Jacob Gengnagle (17), Jacob Stengel (20) and Christian Stengel (17). They answered their uncle's call and together with Adam Knipp, learned from Bihler how to manage a cattle ranch. After he was satisfied the young men understood the business, he assigned Gengnagle and Jacob Stengel to his Napa properties around Huichita Creek. Adam Knipp and Christian Stengel were left to manage the German Rancho, while Bihler settled in around Lakeville where, in 1859, he had acquired 8,000 acres for cattle raising. He had also established five slaughterhouses along the Petaluma, Sonoma and Napa Rivers, from where he could transport the beef to San Francisco and other areas by boat.

This area surrounding us was the major location of activity throughout the cattle ranching/dairy ranching days on the German Rancho. It was the main source of beef in the area. It continued as such for almost 100 years. Even during the years in which the Del Mar lumber mill operated, cattle continued to graze here. The manager of the ranch at that time and his family lived in the house on the ridge ([next page](#)) built by Adam Knipp and Christian Stengel.



Later, Frick built a house (below) along the road for his ranch manager, south of the barn. When



the Ohlsons bought the property from Walter Frick's estate, Elmer Ohlson lived in this house. In 1953 he married and built a new house, which today houses our library and is called the Ohlson Ranch Center, seen peeking out from the trees across the entrance drive from this marker.

HUGAL'S RAVINE
40-19, MAP 5, PAGE 58

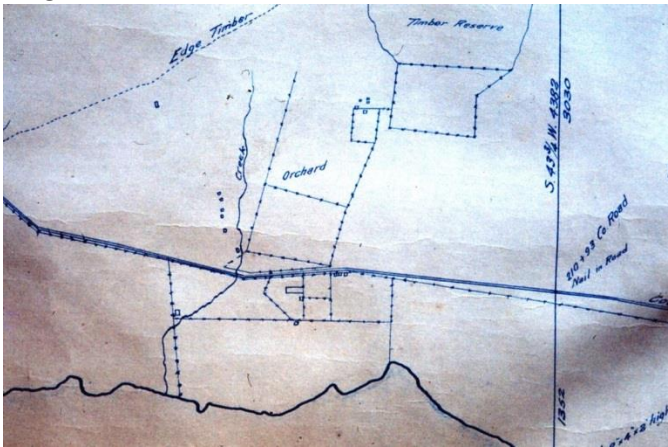
Ernst Rufus, William Benitz, Frederick Hugal and Henry Hegeler were partners in the original acquisition of the German Rancho, now The Sea Ranch. Rufus secured the land grant from Mexico and sent Hugal to establish a settlement there.

When Henry Hegeler joined Hugal, he may have helped build a grist mill along the ravine to the north of and downslope from their cabins up on the ridge. The ravine was also used for butchering cattle. They planted an orchard directly below this marker. A lonely fruit tree remnant is seen in the middle of what was the orchard. In addition, down the hillside they planted potatoes, green peas and other vegetables. The area Hugal and Hegeler built on was the largest area of relatively flat land on the German Rancho. When Rufus discovered this, he apparently became angry because he wanted this area for himself. This was the beginning of the end for the partnership. In 1847 Rufus sold Hugal the northern quarter of the rancho, which extended from the Gualala River to the south end of unit 18. Hegeler, with whom he was also upset, was sold the southern quarter, the least desirable part of the entire property, around Gerstle Cove and Salt Point. The middle portion he sold to a Carlos Glein of San Francisco. Rufus then moved to the town of Sonoma, where he spent the rest of his life.

William Benitz eventually purchased the Fort Ross property, and built somewhat of an empire for himself. After Rufus, he partnered with a Charles Meyer. In 1849

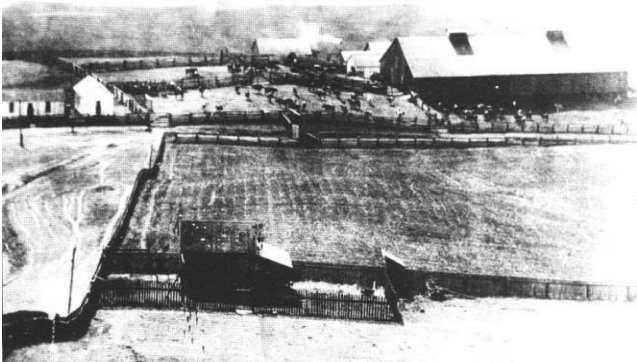
he and Meyer purchased Hugal's portion of the German Rancho. Hugal apparently left for the gold country. Benitz and Meyer added their own cattle and horses to those of Hugal. Before Hegeler moved back to Bloomfield, where he had married and established a home, he helped the new owners build a landing by the barn/warehouse, which stood close to the bluff north of today's white barn. In 1851 Hegeler defaulted on a loan, and his southern portion of the German Rancho was sold to Samuel Duncan, who was interested in the timber.

Benitz and Meyer ran into some financial difficulties in the mid 1850s, but recovered from them, holding on to Fort Ross by selling their 8,970 acres on the German Rancho to William Bihler and his partner Charles Wagner in 1855.



1907 map of the area surrounding the Knipp-Stengel barn which appears as a small rectangle, paralleling the county road. Across the road above and to the right of the orchard are the original dwellings. The logger cabins line up along the creek which is in Hugal's Ravine.

KNIPP-STENGEL ERA
1859-1904
40-20, MAP 5, PAGE 58



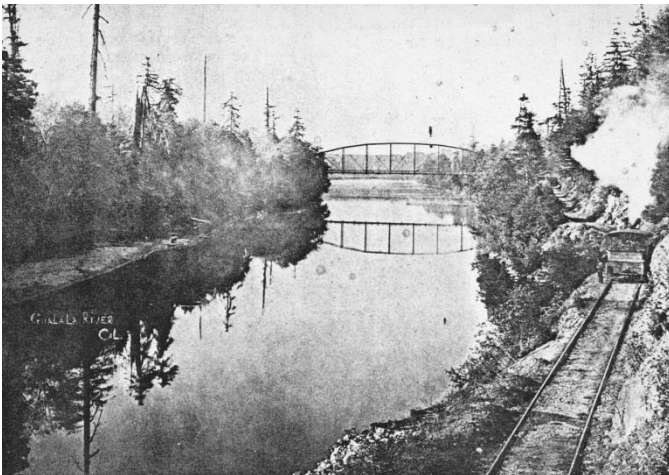
Adam Knipp and Chris Stengel became every bit the rancher William Bihler was, after Bihler put them in charge of his German Rancho. Both were “hands-on” ranchers, working the property with only two other men in 1860. Initially Knipp and Stengel had to overcome two severe winters in 1861 and 1862, as well as a tragic accident which killed Christian’s brother Jacob in 1862. Christian buried Jacob on the ridge above and a few hundred yards south of the eucalyptus grove. They managed the challenges they had to face, prospered, and by 1865 they were able to buy the 900 prime acres around the original settlement from Bihler. By the end of the 1870s they had built a two story house([pictured on page 60](#)) on the ridge north of the eucalyptus crown but a little south of where Hugal had his cabin.

The largest business in the area was the Gualala Mill, just north of the Gualala River. When Bihler became involved with it, it grew even larger. Knipp and Stengel contracted with them to provide the mill with a ton of beef weekly. Like Hugal, they continued to slaughter the cattle in Hugal's Ravine, and then took the meat by wagon to the mill.

In the 1870s and 1880s road improvements led to the development of the dairy business and, of course, the two men made that transition as well. 1892 brought a bridge over the Gualala River ([pictured on next page](#)) that further facilitated transportation. Adam Knipp and Chris Stengel took advantage of all these opportunities. The Knipp-Stengel barn was built some time during this period, probably in the 1880s. Today the structure is on the National Register of Historic Places and the Sonoma County landmarks list. During this period the two men also purchased more acreage from Bihler. Eventually they would own 6,000 acres, 4,000 of which were for ranching, the balance for timber. The men were very successful as cattlemen, dairymen and farmers.

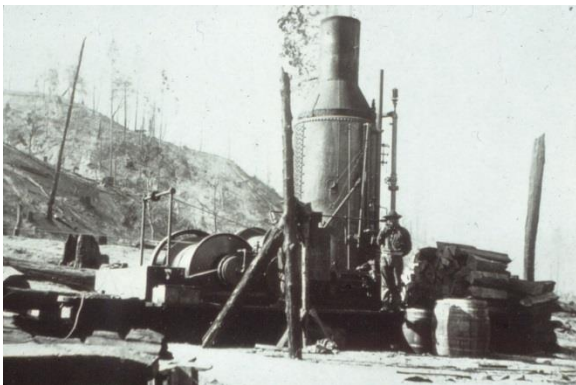
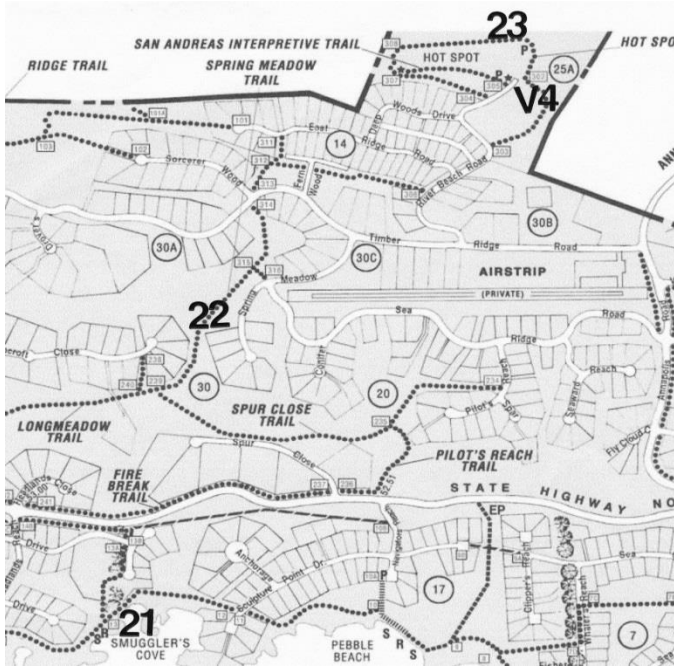
By 1890 the two men had acquired Bihler's Landing at Black Point, which had become a shipping and receiving site for not only lumber products, but also other goods, and passengers. They formed the Commercial Bay Company with three other individuals. A small community had grown up around the landing including a hotel, saloon and post office together with other structures. One of these structures was a livery stable, which is the barn structure west of The Sea Ranch Lodge.

By the turn of the century, Knipp and Stengel were in their sixties, and after close to five decades as farmers and ranchers, they were considering retiring. By 1903 Adam Knipp, the older of the two, provided his longtime partner a power of attorney and moved back to Baltimore. By early 1904 Stengel had completed sale of the property to George and William Bender, San Francisco lumbermen.



This photo looks west at the first wooden bridge across the Gualala River built in 1892. Note the lumber train on the right bank heading toward the mill from the woods.

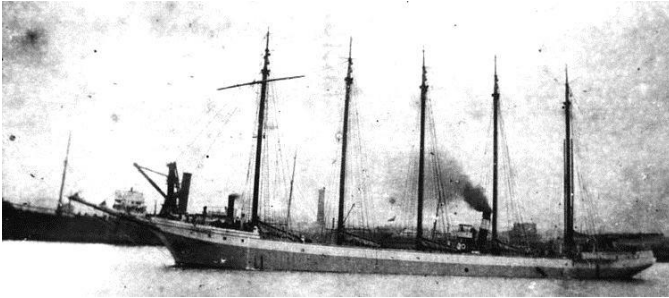
MAP 6



The Steam Donkey

SMUGGLERS COVE
18-21, MAP 6, PAGE 70

On January 16th, 1919, the 18th amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, and one year later prohibition of alcoholic beverages went into effect. Almost immediately a new industry, albeit illegal, was created: bootlegging. It took any number of forms, but one which proved particularly effective was the use of ocean going ships called "Mother Ships," like the pictured



"Malahat," queen of the west coast rumrunners, with a hauling capacity of 60,000 cases of liquor. The ships most often came from Canada, like the "Malahat," whose home port was Vancouver, British Columbia. They would anchor offshore and dispense their cargo to small boats generally operated by locals familiar with the coastal coves and terrain. They would usually bring the cargo ashore in a remote location, where police authorities were scarce and had to cover a large area. All the criteria needed for successful smuggling were found on our north coast. In addition, the coastal fog provided cover, the forests provided hiding places and there was no shortage of men who could use the additional income, not to mention the alcohol. The logistics were a little more difficult than before, but not insurmountable. A popular saying of the time was:

“Prohibition was better than no liquor at all.” (“Last Call” by Daniel Okrent, 2010)

Two favorite places on the Del Mar Ranch were at Black Point Beach and Smugglers Cove, which is before you south of this marker. Imagine trucks parked up on the bluff having come down a farm road, perhaps to where you see houses now across the cove, waiting silently with lights off as the sky darkens. In the distance you can barely make out a ship, perhaps the “Malahat,” sitting out on the ocean. Then, almost magically, a group of small launches appear loaded with cases of liquor or perhaps towing barrels behind them. Once on the beach, cases would be carried and barrels rolled to the bluff, where they would be hoisted up and loaded on the trucks. They might cover the shipment with hay, apples, wood or anything that one might expect to see being transported in this locale. The Mother Ship would sail off into the fog bank sitting well offshore; the trucks would slowly head toward the County Road still with lights off. The small boats might be hidden on the beach, and the men who handled the cargo would climb the bluff returning to their local homes with money in their pocket for the night’s work.

According to his son David, Fred Sagehorn, (Walter Frick’s ranch manager at the time), and his wife were threatened by bootleggers after they reported the nighttime activities to governmental agents. The Sagehorns left Del Mar in 1929, four years before the prohibition amendment was repealed.

WORLD WAR II RADAR STATION
30A-22, MAP 6, PAGE 70

The Ohlson family, longtime sheep ranchers in the Annapolis area, acquired what is now The Sea Ranch from the Walter P. Frick estate on March 17, 1941. The family owned and operated the 4,819 acre ranch, raising sheep until 1964, when they sold it to Oceanic Properties (a subsidiary of Castle and Cooke), who then developed The Sea Ranch. Nine months after the Ohlsons purchased the ranch, our country entered World War II. One of the immediate actions taken by the military following the United States' entry into the conflict was to acquire California sites both inland and along the coast for various military activities including patrols, radar installations, gun emplacements and practice bombing targets. The military purchased, leased, had the sites "donated"/loaned by landowners, received permits from other governmental entities or acquired sites through leasehold condemnation for the period of time the property was needed.

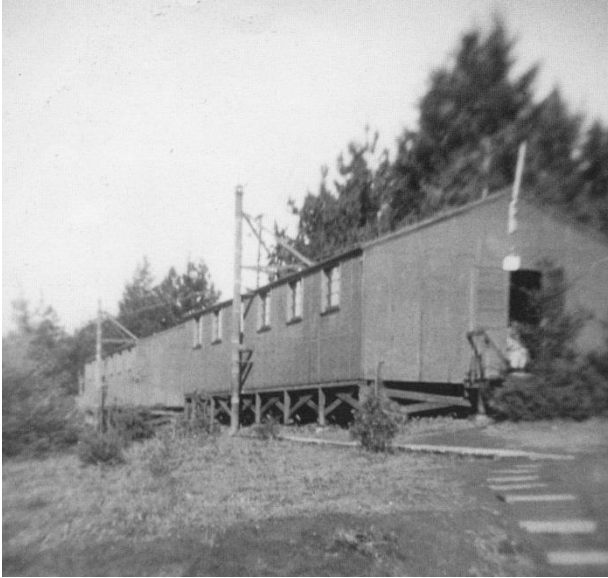
To this end the Army arrived at the future Sea Ranch locale in 1942 seeking an advantageous site for a U.S. Army Air Forces aircraft control and warning station. The station was to be used in detecting and identifying aircraft entering the area and if necessary direct U.S. fighters to intercept possible hostile threats. There is little to no information about how the site was selected or what conversations or agreements may have transpired between the army and the Ohlsons. Nevertheless the base was established on 12.5 acres



about a mile's drive north of Annapolis Road off Timber Ridge Road on and around the Drover's Close cul-de-sac. Some of the personnel stationed here were from the Fourth Air Force's San Francisco Control Group based at Hamilton Field at the outbreak of the war.

Because of the nature of its operation, the base was constructed in secret. The remoteness of the area and the sparse population helped. Many people then and now never knew it was there. The buildings were built to look like ranch buildings, such as the barracks pictured on the [next page](#). This was a tactic used at other observation posts. Further, most of these sites didn't appear on any of the military's station lists. All

buildings other than the radar structure were set back far enough off the ridge so seeing them from the highway was difficult.

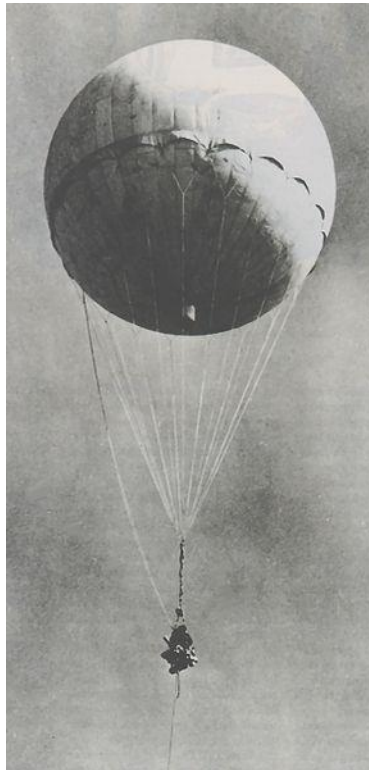


For the next two years, the base operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week, monitoring the radar equipment and patrolling the beach with the 35 dogs they had at the camp. There are also reports the base had a 75MM mobile gun. It was mounted on a vehicle and used to patrol the beach along the highway. In 1944 their status was reduced to semi-active. A year later they were back to full tactical status tracking Japanese balloon bombs ([see photo on page76](#)). These devices were armed with incendiary and high explosive bombs by the Japanese, and then released into the jet stream to float across the ocean, landing on the U.S. coast.

For recreation the men had a recreation hall as part of the building that housed the mess hall. There was a

pool table and they also showed movies, inviting the Ohlson family to join them. The Ohlson women would play the piano and sing for the men. They could also go into Santa Rosa or Healdsburg for a movie or other diversions as well as the Gualala Hotel, which has always been a social gathering place.

In 1946 preparations began to be made for the camp's closure. The site was transferred to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on March 28, 1948. From there it is assumed the Ohlsons again regained control of the property.



LOGGING TECHNIQUES 25A-23, MAP 6, PAGE 70

The redwood trees harvested along the Sonoma and Mendocino coast from the 1850s to the 1880s were huge. Harvesting began with the timber along rivers, close to the ocean and in ravines. This wood was easier to reach and transport than other giants deeper in the forest. The early loggers cut these redwoods with only an ax and saw. They worked at slicing the tree standing



on precarious platforms called springboards several feet off the ground. They did this to avoid having to cut the trunk, which spread out at the bottom. The lower trunk would have been more difficult to cut, would have presented problems keeping the section afloat in the water and might not even have fit the milling machine. This is why throughout our woods you will see huge, high stumps. Look at these stumps for notches cut in the stump. These were used to hold the springboards. Once the tree was down, it was trimmed and cut into sections, then moved into the river to float down to a crib built in the water at the Gualala Mill, where it would wait to be taken in the mill for sawing into

lumber. Where there wasn't enough water to float the logs, skid roads were constructed. Skid roads were created by laying logs side by side in trenches as if they were laying railroad tracks in trenches and filling in dirt between the logs so their horses or oxen would be able



to walk as they dragged the logs out of the woods. Water or other type of lubricant would be used to moisten the logs, making the pulling easier. Take the San Andreas Fault Interpretive Trail, [V4 on Map 6, Page 70](#), beginning at trail post 305. On this hillside trail you will see an old logging road at number 10, springboard notches at number 11, and at number 14, the location of an old skid road.

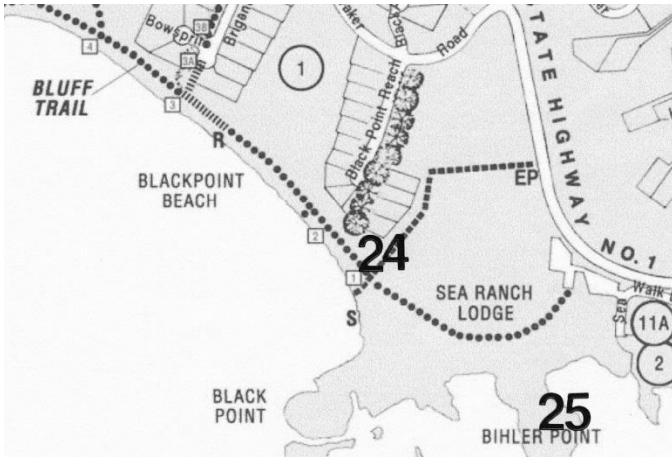
In the late 1870s into the 1880s steam power mechanization came to the woods in the form of railroad trains and an odd but powerful piece of equipment called the “steam donkey” ([see page 70](#)). The “donkey” was essentially a steam boiler attached to a mobile platform rigged with drums or spools around which cable was attached. It would pull mighty logs out of the woods more easily than men and oxen teams.

The Gualala Mill had the first railroad in the area (see [picture on page 69](#)). It ran up the Gualala River almost to Annapolis Road, not too much further south than the point in the river opposite this marker. Maps show it ran on the eastern side of the river. Spur tracks ran up major creeks like Rockpile, Pepperwood, Wheatfield and Buckeye. The logged timber was loaded on the train (see [prior page](#)), which transported it to the mill. After milling, the train hauled the finished wood further north to Bourns Landing (pictured) for shipping, primarily to



San Francisco. William and George Bender signed contracts with Gualala Mill in the mid-1890s to cut “split stuff.” These were products like fence posts, railroad ties, shingles, firewood, essentially anything but lumber. Part of their contract required them to use the Gualala Mill railroad. This probably convinced them to build their own railroad once they acquired the property along the coast to establish their Del Mar Mill. Whether they completed it or not before their financial troubles is uncertain. However, the managers appointed by the Bender Brothers’ receivers did use the railroad, which ran from the mill to just north of the Knipp-Stengel Barn. They used movable spur tracks up the ravines where bull teams or steam donkeys pulled the wood out to load the train cars.

MAP 7



Blackpoint Landing is the faint building in the distance over the boy's right shoulder. The stagecoach is in front of the hotel and store. The hotel livery is on the other side of the hotel, not visible here, but [see picture on page 86](#).

KENKOKU MARU GROUNDING
1-24, MAP 7, PAGE 80

On April 28th 1951, the 7,000 ton Japanese freighter Kenkoku Maru, headed for San Francisco, ran aground on Black Point Beach. Originally the ship reported they were beached on the Farallon Islands. This wasn't corrected until local resident Thomas Christensen heard the ship's horn, went down to the beach, and saw the huge steamship helplessly stranded. The local man



called the Coast Guard. Various efforts were employed to dislodge the behemoth, but all failed and for the next 25 days the ship became a tourist attraction, much to the dismay of property owner Ed Ohlson.

At low tide sightseers would climb the rigging to tour the ship, and crew members would go ashore for exercise and perhaps participate in the holiday atmosphere. Finally a solution was hit upon. The Kenkoku Maru had a double bottom, the lower one

ripped by the rocks. It was decided to cut the jagged section and fill what was left with air from powerful compressors. This, together with the year's highest tide and cables from a towing barge, managed to get the steamship out to deep water so it could continue on to San Francisco to be repaired.

This may have been the last major ship wreck/stranding on Sea Ranch. The first may have been just a short distance south of here at Bihler's Point, which is directly behind the Sea Ranch Lodge. The 30-year-old doghole schooner "Ruth" wrecked there on May 11, 1893. The ship landings that developed along the coast were not much more than small coves. The derogatory name "dogholes" was how they were described because it was said they were so tight not even a dog could turn around in them. Undertows, shallow reefs, thick kelp, swells and hidden rocks were ever present hazards with these sites. To deal with the dog hole ports, ships called schooners were developed as vessels used for short hauls. They generally had two masts, were faster, easier to handle, needed smaller crews, were made of wood, and were less expensive to operate than other sailing ships. Compared to other boats, the schooners were shorter in length, wider, had shallower hull depths and were generally under 200 tons. From 1860 to 1884 about 70% of vessels built were sail powered only ("The Doghole Schooners" by Walter Jackson). After 1884 most had steam power. Steam allowed the boats to go even when there was no wind. In addition it allowed the vessel to move up rivers where that was possible. The steam schooners generally still had sails, in case the engine or boiler failed.

BLACK POINT SETTLEMENT
1-25, MAP 7, PAGE 80

William Bihler and Charles Dingley, partners with others in the Gualala Mill, were also partners in another lumber venture east of Stewarts Point, which they had purchased from John Rutherford, former owner of the original Gualala Mill. D.L.B. Ross was the foreman of the mill for this operation. Their milled lumber was carried on horse drawn railroad cars to Stewarts Point Landing for shipment to San Francisco.

In 1876 Bihler and Ross teamed up to construct a landing at Black Point on Bihler's property, becoming one more doghole port for the little schooners specifically designed for these tight, dangerous landings. They originally constructed two slide trough chutes, similar to the one pictured at Stewarts Point.



Only one of them proved effective. Later they went to a wire "chute" [pictured on the next page](#) loading a steam schooner at Bihler's Landing. William Bihler himself had his own fleet of these ships, one aptly named "Bill The Butcher." By the end of the decade the partners were shipping a substantial amount of lumber together with tanoak bark for the tanning industry and firewood.

Later as the timber became scarce, they also shipped wood posts and railroad ties.



A community built up around the landing (pictured on pages [80](#) and [86](#)) including a store, blacksmith, hotel, livery (the present day barn west of the lodge), a wagon maker and a post office in the hotel from 1888 to 1902. Of course, there were homes for the people who worked in and around the settlement.

Adam Knipp and Christian Stengel eventually purchased the location from Bihler. It became less active after 1904 as the timber became more scarce, about the time William and George Bender purchased the property. Shipping from the point ceased in 1917 and the community faded away.

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The following photos are courtesy of The Sea Ranch Archives, taken from various presentations by Janann Strand, a long-time Sea Rancher. Often seen hiking our woods, meadows and bluff, she documented the wonders she discovered and guided others to them in articles she wrote for booklets about our many miles of trails. Many of these photos came from Susan Clark's collection and are used with her permission. Pages [52](#), [57](#), [66](#), [70](#), [80](#) and [86](#).

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Images on pages [18](#), [25](#) and [69](#) were provided by Nicholas Lee who spent many years in the park service and has a profound interest in our coastal history.

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The picture on [page 77](#) is from the San Andreas Trail Interpretive Guide. Harry Lindstrom provided the photos on pages [12](#), [36](#), [40](#) and [88](#).



Black Point store and hotel. Note the structure off to the left and behind this building. This was the livery for the hotel and is the barn which still stands today west of The Sea Ranch Lodge.

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