



FIRST FARM
By Harry Lindstrom
The Sea Ranch Archives Committee

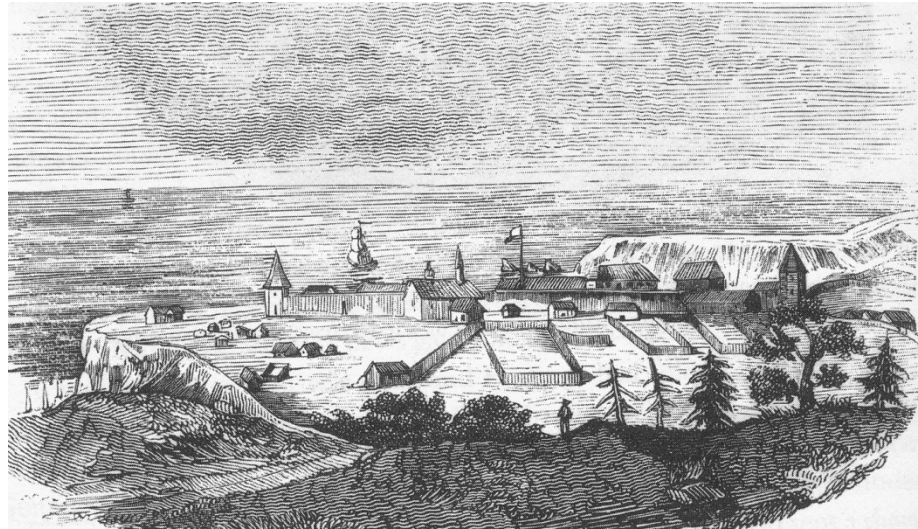


FIRST FARM

Russian America

Some historians believe Russia may have established a settlement in Alaska as early as the 17th century, but no real documentation exists to prove this. There are documented visits by Russian expeditions in the 18th century as early as 1733 which is cited by some sources as the beginning of Russian colonization of the Americas. A 1741-1742 expedition which probably explored the area around Prince of Wales Island, brought back sea otter pelts which became highly prized. This greatly encouraged Alaskan settlements as fur traders made longer trips lasting up to four years. They established trading posts and communities in which to live. The Russians utilized the Aleuts, native Alaskans, to do much of the otter hunting. In 1799 the Russian American Company was formed, then chartered and charged by the Russian Tsar to broaden the colonization of Alaska as well as giving a third of its profit to the Tsar. Settlements had been formed on Kodiak Island and what is now Sitka. Sitka originally was called New Archangel and was the capitol of Russian America.

The Russians were mainly occupied with hunting sea otters for their valued pelts, especially for the China trade. They made good use of the skilled native Alaskan hunters primarily the Aleuts and the Koniags. They used kayaks killing the otters with darts or arrows attached to a line. The natives were paid wages depending how successful they were.



These Alaskan outposts were not able to produce enough food to be self sufficient. The Russians began looking to

California for that purpose and as another source for otter which were becoming depleted in Alaska from the hunting. The establishment of Fort Ross in 1812 on the northern California coast was supposed to fill that need. Although the Spanish, then Mexico after 1821 objected to the Russian presence, they never had enough military power to succeed in evicting them. At Fort Ross the Russians also made use of Indian labor, including local Pomo native Americans.

The Germans

German immigrants to America in the 1830s and 1840s were seeking large tracts of land they could own and farm. They also dreamed of having a German community where they could continue their native customs. John Sutter was one of the first arriving in New York in 1834. He moved westward dealing in the horse trade along the Santa Fe Trail between New Mexico and Missouri. He eventually continued his westward migration along the Oregon Trail to Oregon engaging in the fur trade as well as selling horses and mules. During his travels he heard grand tales of California. Anxious to get there, in 1838 he was convinced by others it would be quicker to go to Hawaii and catch a ship to San Francisco rather than crossing the mountains in winter. The advice was of questionable value. He ended up spending several

months in Hawaii before getting a boat bound for California with a stop at the Russian-American Company outpost of New Archangel on Sitka sound in Alaska. Sutter learned valuable lessons here on the exploitation of Indian labor not only for commercial purposes but for military needs as well. Sutter arrived in Monterey, California's port of entry under Mexican rule in 1839. Through his contacts and letters of reference he meets with Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado. He applies for a land grant in the Sacramento Valley. The Governor grants him a conditional one, requiring Sutter to live in California for a year before becoming a Mexican citizen. Alvarado also required Sutter to rid the area of horse thieves.

After Monterey, Sutter pays a visit to Alvarado's uncle, Mariano Vallejo, the Mexican Military Commander of California. After visiting Vallejo, Sutter goes to visit Baron Alexander Rotchev the last Russian Commander at Fort Ross serving from 1838 to 1841. Sutter was impressed with the many types of labors being performed at this isolated frontier outpost hunting, fishing, agriculture, ". . . laborers and mechanics of the colonial service, blacksmiths, tailors, shoemakers, etc. there was a tannery also." (2, p.59) In addition, as in Alaska, he was impressed with the efficient use of Indian labor and the military might, although it was obvious the Mexican military was unable and unwilling to exert any force over the Russians. This convinced Sutter he could do the same thing in the Sacramento Valley and he eventually did, only failing to succeed beyond his wildest dreams because of a lack of business acumen and character flaws which created problems for him all his life.

The Russians in 1841 decided Fort Ross was not as successful a venture as they had hoped. They tried selling it to Vallejo who balked at the purchase. They then turned to Sutter who eventually convinced them to sell the property to him on credit. He was to pay the loan off in crops and meat by 1845. The validity of the contract of sale was questionable and eventually would cause Sutter no end of trouble as he tried to get proper title.

Four other Germans arrived in California about the same time as Sutter. Frederick Hugal came to Freestone a few miles east of Fort Ross to help build a grist mill. Afterwards he went to San Francisco and met John Sutter, joining Sutter on his trip to the Sacramento Valley. Henry Hageler came to Sonoma in 1843 as a ship's carpenter and was known as a skilled carpenter and mechanic. It's possible Hageler met Hugal in Freestone. Given his skills, he may have helped with the grist mill construction. Because of the Sutter connection they eventually became acquainted with William Benitz and Ernst Rufus who were with Sutter at Sutter's Fort (present day Sacramento). Rufus had trained Indians at Fort Sutter to be soldiers. They were used to support a Mexican governor of California. This eventually helped Rufus when he sought a land grant for the German Rancho, most of which became The Sea Ranch.

After Sutter acquired Fort Ross, he sent Benitz to manage it for him in 1844. Rufus was sent by Sutter to the fort a year later. Hageler and Hugal were also back in Sonoma County. All four men became interested in the area further north of Fort Ross and Ernst Rufus in 1846 secured a land grant for it primarily because of his prior service to Mexico and the Mexican citizenship he held. Rufus sent Hageler and Hugal to the property to make improvements and establish a presence, both requirements of the land grant. They picked the spot surrounding today's white barn. It was the largest, relatively flat area on the property. They built homes on the hill east of the barn, north of the eucalyptus grove which is still visible today. They constructed farm/ranch buildings close to the ocean. They also built a grist mill along the ravine which stretches from the top of the hill down to where highway 1 is today.



Conflicts arose amongst the men when Rufus, who was the sole holder of the grant, allegedly didn't live up to his part of the bargain. Benitz by the 1850s was sole owner of Fort Ross and spent all his energies there. Rufus, who seldom went north to the German Rancho began selling pieces of it and moves to the town of Sonoma. One of the people who bought a piece was a man named William Bihler. After immigrating to America from Germany he made his way to San Francisco. Here he established himself as a butcher, becoming a large distributor of beef. He began looking for land where he could raise his own beef to supply his wholesale business. By 1855 Bihler and partner Charles Wagner owned the German Rancho and then in 1857 Bihler bought out Wagner. Bihler also established operations in Napa and Lakeville, a little southeast of Petaluma. In 1859 he decided running this empire was too much for him, so he sent for his Baltimore nephews; Jacob and Chris Stengel and Jacob Grengnagel. In addition, Bihler who fancied prize horses, had a

man named Adam Knipp bring him a stallion from the east coast. Bihler taught all four ranching; sending the two Jacobs to Napa, he, Bihler, would run Lakeville with Adam Knipp and Chris Stengel in charge of the German Rancho.

Knipp and Stengel eventually purchased the ranch from Bihler and ran it very successfully until the dawning of the 20th century at which time it was sold to William and George Bender. The Bender Brothers established a lumber mill at Del Mar Point. They over extended themselves with the purchase, and the property fell into the hands of a group of receivers. The trustees hired others to run the lumber mill until 1910 when it burned. In 1912 they finally found a buyer for the 4,819 acre Del Mar Rancho, lumber broker, Walter P. Frick.

“A Product of His Times” (10)

“He was conservative, ambitious and an absentee father. His life is marked repeatedly by hard driving business deals, and ones in which he made large amounts of money.” (10) Walter Frick was an ambitious, astute, perhaps ruthless businessman. He was born in 1875, 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. Both men were on the Board of Directors of the Western Mortgage and Guaranty Company. Burgess was President of the company and R.H. Miller was Secretary. “The Western Mortgage and Guaranty Company is carrying on a business of loaning money on real estate and guaranteeing and reselling mortgage loans.” (6) Four months after Frick bought the Sonoma rancho he and Burgess set up Del Mar Development Company to manage and improve it. The following advertisement announced the sale of the property.

THE FAMOUS
KNIPP & STINGLE RANCH

(SONOMA COUNTY)

SUBDIVISION

DAIRY LANDS •

APPLE LANDS

PEAR LANDS

BERRY LANDS

For GENERAL FARMING There is
NOTHING BETTER in the STATE

Every subdivision of 200 acres has Water
Frontage, Bottom Land, Up Land, Rolling
Land, some Timber Land; the Ideal Com-
bination for a General Farm; Beautiful Lo-
cation; Splendid Climate; No Malaria.

Price

Only \$50 per Acre

TERMS: \$10 per acre Cash; balance to suit buyer

Old time residents in the neighborhood
now making reservations; they have
known the ranch for years and want some
of it. This is our best recommendation
for the land,

Remember--Only \$50 per Acre

Write for Particulars

R. N. Burgess Company

734 Market St., San Francisco, Cal.

Potrero Hill, San Francisco

When people talk of San Francisco's history, seldom is it about its Russian community which has existed for over 100 years. Most people know of Russian Hill and assume this was the site of an early Russian settlement but, in fact, it was not. It was the site of an early graveyard where Russian explorers, fur traders and ship crew members were buried when they died during early expeditions. The first documented visit by Russians to San Francisco was in 1806 when an official of the Russian American Company, Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov brought his ship into San Francisco's natural harbor. His mission was to secure wheat and other necessities for Russia's outposts in Alaska. He established an excellent relationship with the Spanish who then allowed him to trade in Spanish California. Then in 1816 Otto Von Kotzebue on a worldwide expedition sailed into San Francisco Bay with a botanist and an artist who recorded much about local native populations, plants and animals. By then the Russians had built their fortifications at Fort Ross in Sonoma County. An 1823-24 visit by Russian naval vessels provided money to build the Fort Ross Chapel. In 1840 Ilya Gavrilovich Voznesenskii was sent to explore the islands of San Francisco Bay as well as other locations in Russian America.

In 1863 the Russian Czar sent six ships under the command of Andrei A. Popov as a sign of support for the United States Federal Government during the Civil War. They were located in San Francisco Bay. During their stay a terrible fire broke out on a wharf. The Russians were instrumental in fighting the fire. Six of their crew were killed. A Russian community was beginning to form about this time in San Francisco. The first church which provided services for Orthodox Russians, Serbs and Greeks was established in 1864. The first newspaper in Russian was published in 1872.

In the late 19th and early 20th century Russia was in turmoil. A failed revolution marked by worker strikes and military mutinies led to executions and the imprisonment of many. What ensued was political chaos forming the backdrop for the rise of Vladimir Lenin and communism. Religious persecution, especially of non-orthodox sects, was part of the turmoil. Russian Jews began immigrating in the 1880s. By 1900 other religious orders like the Molokans and Baptists were affected. These latter two groups, like the Jews before them, began immigrating to America. They settled around Potrero Hill in San Francisco. Other Russians who were capable of leaving the country, left. Such was the case for Emelian (Emil) Noshkin.

Emil Noshkin's birth year has been variously cited anywhere between 1862 and 1871. For instance, the 1912 passenger list of the Star of Persia shows him as 41 years old whereas the California Death Index documents January 1, 1862 as his birth date. A family tree on Ancestry.Com has his birthplace as Moscow. He married Mary Simonovina Shulin (Shukin, Shuken, Shubin and other variations) about 1890. Mary's birth has been cited as 1873. Although it has been indicated as early as 1863. Emil appears to have been an ambitious, successful merchant in Russia. He and Mary were Russian Baptists. No doubt concern over the family's welfare led them to seek a better life outside the tumultuous environment that was early 20th century Russia. Like other Russian Baptists they looked at America and specifically San Francisco. In late 1911 or early 1912 they embarked on their journey. Emil's success as a flour manufacturer in Vladivostok allowed his family to take advantage of the opportunities in the United States which had been related to them by their countrymen who preceded the Noshkins to America.

When they left Russia, Emil and Mary had 10 children and 12 pieces of luggage. The names (and variations found in the research) of the children (and approximate ages at the time) were Maria/Mary (20), Fedor/Theodore (19), Michael (17), Vladimir (15), Katia/Katherine (9), Sania/Alexander (8), Nadia (7), Venci/Benjamin (6), Luba/Love/Lavona (4), and Victor (3). Adding to the challenges of their

adventure, Mary was pregnant. They made their way to Kobe Japan and from there booked passage to Yokohama aboard the Japanese steamer Amucusa. The ship encountered a violent storm, “. . . pitched and tossed so wildly, that the officers humanely put into the famous islet (Miyajima)” (11D). Miyajima was and still is a sacred island for Buddhists located in The Seto Inland Sea. At the time the island was noteworthy (enchanted to some) because no one had ever been born there and no one had ever died there. However, during the time the ship was anchored there Mary Noshkin gave birth to daughter Vera “. . . amid the sunny groves of Miyajima” (11E). This was a very newsworthy item at the time as it was reported in newspapers in California, Oklahoma, Minnesota and Michigan and no doubt appeared elsewhere not identified in researching the event. Pictured is the Itsukushima Shinto Shrine located on Miyajima. The photograph was taken in 2008. Even today births and deaths are prohibited near the shrine to protect the shrine’s purity.



Following the storm the ship moved on to Yokohama where the Noshkins continued their trip aboard the steamship Star of Persia owned by an American Company, The Pacific Mail Steamship Company. They arrived in Honolulu on April 16th of 1912, then continued on to San Francisco arriving on April 24th. From 1910 to 1940 Angel Island in San Francisco Bay processed immigrants to the West Coast. During this time 12,000 Russians were ushered into the United States at Angel Island. It didn’t appear the Noshkins spent much time there. Early immigrants, other than those from China were processed quickly, unless problems were discovered. This changed later, after the Bolshevik Revolution caused the number of refugees to the United States to increase.

Emil’s original plans were to establish himself as a flour manufacturer as he had in Russia. He altered his plans probably 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 managed to mobilize a large group of Russians and they began their search. This effort undertaken shortly after his arrival evidences a strong leadership capability and a great deal of self confidence. Similar to the Germans they looked north at Sonoma and Mendocino counties. It’s quite possible they noticed the Burgess advertisement. Emil, ambitious, hard working and confident wouldn’t let this opportunity he’d heard so much about pass him by. Knowledge of the Fort Ross colony which existed for 30 years in the same area may have given them added encouragement with the prospect of re-establishing the Russian presence on the north coast. This optimism and eagerness may be what caused them later problems.

First Farm - “Beautiful Location; Splendid Climate; No Malaria”

The advertisement run by Burgess suggests Frick and Burgess originally planned to subdivide the property into 200 acre parcels and sell them. What type of arrangement they originally struck with Emil

is unclear. One reliable source (9) indicates the property was rented to the Russian Group. However, a



The Star of Persia.

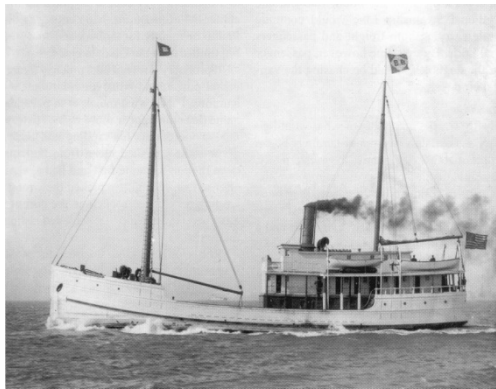
When the Noshkin family boarded the ship, it had been in service for 31 years. It was built in Belfast, Ireland. It was 430 feet long and 42 feet wide. It travelled at 14 knots, about 16 miles an hour.



Russian immigrants at Angel Island around 1918.

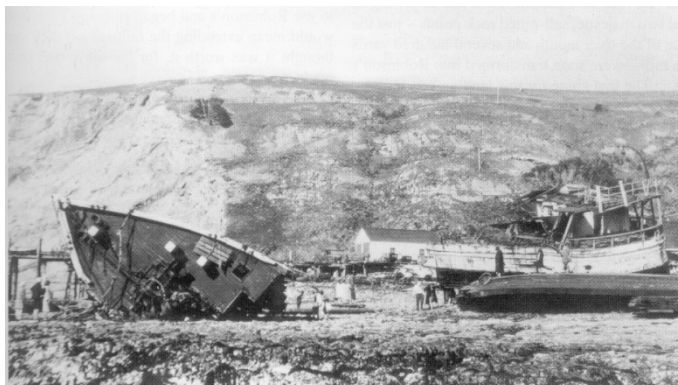
Mendocino Beacon article dated August 27, 1912 reported; “Five thousand acres of land have been bought for the colony by M. Kelson and A. G. Lyon, representing E. Noshkin, President of the colony.” There was an M. Kelson who worked as a manager in the San Francisco Colonization Department of the Nevada California Oregon Railway Company. (12B) Since railroads often opened up frontier for settlers, their colonization departments were responsible for identifying regions “. . . well supplied with natural resources for agricultural and industrial development.” (17) They then could encourage people to settle in the areas. His expertise was certainly what Emil might use in searching for property and he lived very near Potrero Hill. A. G. Lyon was a San Francisco lawyer and lived a little southwest of Potrero Hill with an office near Golden Gate Park close to another area which became a Russian community. (12A) “The representatives of the colony spent four months in looking for suitable land in California.” The article goes on to explain; “California will be the future home of practically the entire membership of the Russian Baptist Church. Twenty families belonging to the denomination driven out of Siberia by the attitude of the Russian government toward the church, have made arrangements to settle at Delmar, Sonoma County.” “The twenty families will go on the land next week. Two hundred more families will come from Russia soon to settle.”

The August 31st, 1912 Mendocino Beacon reported “The Sea Foam sailed for the city last Saturday evening about 10 o’clock having been somewhat delayed in securing her load of lumber.” She also took



a number of passengers back to San Francisco from the town of Mendocino. The Sea Foam plied the coastal waters from San Francisco to Mendocino with stops in between, including Point Arena, from 1904 until it was wrecked in a 1931 storm. On the ship’s return the August 31st Beacon announced “. . . she brought 96 tons of freight to Point Arena, 5 tons for Little River, 43 tons for Mendocino and 27 tons for Shelter Cove. She 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.”

The newspaper article suggests Noshkin and his group didn’t arrive until August of 1912. However, another source (9) had a group there earlier “. . . planting peas, potatoes, beets, carrots, turnips, watermelons, cantaloupes and hay.” A December 6, 1912 Point Arena Record article reported the industrious group had already plowed a thousand acres. The land they worked was rich as it had not been farmed previously. It’s interesting to speculate whether they may have made use of an 1841 book (13) written by a Russian agricultural expert who spent 10 years at Fort Ross observing the planting activities which went on there. He divided crops into two groups. One that was capable of surviving frost and those not able to withstand low temperatures. He advised when to plow and when to plant. Based on the above list of what they planted, they loosely followed the recommendations, but if they arrived in August they were between the author’s plowing and planting cycles. The book may have come in handy. It further notes if the soil is deeply plowed it has a



remarkable tendency to retain moisture making irrigation rarely necessary. Concerning orchards he recommends apples, pears, peaches, apricots, quince, plums and blue grapes. The Baptist group did not begin any orchards. However, a number existed, planted by those who preceded the Russians, seeds or seedlings being brought to Del Mar from Fort Ross. Surrounding the Del Mar Schoolhouse today are apple trees planted with slips from the old orchard at Fort Ross. Not by the original arrivals, but by Sea Ranchers who helped restore the old schoolhouse. Those planted many years ago are gone now, but for a few remnants behind the Eucalyptus across from Leeward Spur and on the hillside above the treatment pond across from the Knipp-Stengel barn. The Russians at Fort Ross began their orchard in 1814, planting only one peach tree. In 1817 they added grapes and in 1820 a variety of fruit trees; apple, peach, cherry, pear, quince and bergamot. By the time they left in 1841 some 260 trees had been planted. What's left of the orchard can be visited today.

Just when things were going so well, tragedy strikes the colonists. They had ordered two steam tractor engines, probably with gang traction plows, similar to the ones pictured. The group was notified of the delivery to the Point Arena dock. Emil sends Nicholas Podsakoff and two other men to drive one of them down the coast to Del Mar. A September 14th, 1912 Mendocino Beacon article describes what happened. "In the Beacon of February 17th

attention was called to the unsafe condition of the oft-repaired bridge across Schooner Gulch creek." ". . . the 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." ". . . when 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."



The other two men sent by Noshkin, the engineer and his helper were able to jump clear of the falling structure and engine. They suffered only minor injuries. Nicholas Podsakoff was buried at Del Mar. A week and a half later several men from the colony managed to get the engine out of Schooner Gulch by disassembling it. They finally got on their way, only to encounter more trouble north of Anchor Bay. It began to pour rain and the Russians had to park their steam tractor which became encased in mud. When it stopped raining, with more time and effort they finally got the equipment to Del Mar. Its arrival at the colony was bittersweet, being overshadowed by the death of one of their community members.

Despite the tragic incident which accompanied delivery of the anxiously awaited engine, the stalwart colonists pushed on with the establishment of their community. An October 26, 1912 San Francisco Call article reports on their accomplishments and optimism. "The latest colonization project to be effected in this state was recently consummated by the R. N. Burgess company, San Francisco reality operators. The tract, which comprises 5,000 acres of land lying along the west coast of Sonoma county was purchased by a Russian Baptist colony, the first colony of its kind to locate in the United States was the largest real

estate sale ever made in that county. The Sonoma county colony was organized by E. Noshkin, recently of Russian Siberia. To date he has located 80 people on the land. Within a year the full status of 300 will be living on the property. Already they have a score of homes at Del Mar, the townsite of the colony, which will be its shipping and financial center. The town is a seaport, from which the entire produce of the colony will be shipped by water to San Francisco. General farming, including the growing of cereals, fruits and potatoes, will prove the principal occupation, while dairying will follow a close second. 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. The R. H. Burgess company is doing all possible to promote the welfare of the colony. One item of importance is the purchase of 200 cows, involving the expenditure of \$18,000, which amount will be paid back by the colony from profits taken out of the herd. The company is also arranging a canning concern to locate a branch at Del Mar, and, if successful in this project, in the neighborhood of 1,500 acres of tomatoes will be set out next spring. One thousand acres has been set aside by the colonists on which to grow potatoes next year. John Promberger, sales manager of the R. N. Burgess company, in speaking of the new colonization project said: "The next five years will see the Russian Baptist colony one of the most prosperous sections of Sonoma county. First, they are starting right, the soil and every condition favor them; and secondly, they apply the right principles to obtain the best possible results in farming."



It must have been quite interesting and exciting for people who had lived in the area for a long time and were first witnessing the steam traction engines with gang plows. The large, awkward machines lumbering up and down the coastline meadows, belching dark black smoke and making a loud, gasping noise which, at times, caused one to wonder if they could go on much further. There would be an engineer driving it with 2 or 3 men

around the tender making sure the monsters 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. Locals who watched the process were impressed with how the colonists gathered wood to fire the boiler when they ran short of fuel. They would stop the engine and go pull apart fencing to replenish the wood fuel. The group were farmers, not ranchers, so they had only limited need for fences.

Despite the amount of work and time needed to establish their own community, the Russians did not ignore their neighbors. Articles in the September 7, 1912 Beacon and the December 6, 1912 Point Arena Record indicated they were cordial and were a welcome addition to the coastal community. The latter article also indicated they invited residents from neighboring communities when they were dedicating their church. In addition neighbors could graze cattle on acreage the colony didn't need for farming. Baby Vera in later years indicated (9) the group began calling their community First Farm. Further, the Point Arena Record reported the Del Mar Saloon had been converted into a school named Sacel by the colonists. No picture of the saloon/school has been discovered, but the picture on page 9 of the Stewarts Point saloon may be an adequate representation of how it might have appeared. 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. The school roster for the month of December showed 21

students, six of them Noshkins; Alexander, Katherine, Nadia, Victor, Luba and Venci. These were six of the seven youngest. The seventh was Vera, who was only 4 months old. The older boys; Fedor, Michael and Vladimir would probably be working in the fields or at other chores with their father. One of the other students at Sacel, Mary Panamaroff will marry Michael in 1920. Maria would be assisting her mother with the household duties and baby Vera if she made the trip to Del Mar. However, she marries a John Pack of San Francisco. A family tree on Ancestry. Com has the marriage date as July 7th, 1912. If this is the case she would have remained in San Francisco with her husband.

Things were progressing well for the 22 families living at Del Mar. For Emil and his family the American Dream was coming together. The fears which caused them to flee Russia only a little over a year before, must have seemed like a vaguely remembered nightmare. A February 5, 1913 Santa Rosa Republican report "Russians Are Very Diligent" confirmed the surprising success of this hardworking, committed group who had overcome obstacles which to most people would have seemed insurmountable. "L. Briggs with his wife, who are the teachers for the Russian Baptist colonists at Del Mar, on the northwestern coast of Sonoma county, was a visitor in Santa Rosa Wednesday. In speaking of conditions there he stated that the Russians are hard workers and are going to succeed in their colony work. This year they will have about 900 acres under cultivation of the 5000 they own there. The colonists have been there for about seven months now and have built themselves very fair homes. 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. There are 22 families of the colonists at Del Mar now and several more families will arrive soon. While in Santa Rosa Wednesday Mr. Briggs was appointed a deputy by Sheriff J. K. Smith and will look after the peace and quiet of the colony."

The success of this group of people was astounding considering the short period of time they had been at Del Mar and is a testament to the leadership skills of Emil Noshkin. They created homes for their families, prepared land for crops so they could feed themselves, they established good relations with their neighbors, established a church, began a school not only for their children but so that adults could better themselves, were convincing others to join them and now have a Deputy Sheriff for security.

Then it all began to unravel.

Walter P. Frick

It's difficult to feel good about a man like Walter Frick. He and Emil Noshkin make an interesting contrast. They're both ambitious, self confident and seeking wealth. What seems to have been different



about the two of them is their motivations and how they related to people. Frick's life seems to have been consumed by the pursuit of wealth for its own sake. Noshkin's pursuit of wealth included consideration of what it could do for the common good. Their relationship to people is perhaps best defined by looking how they related to their own families. Noshkin's sizeable family was always at his side. Frick's son, in later years revealed he, his brother and his sister were brought up by governesses and Chinese cooks. He said his father was always away from home. (10) In the Frick/Burgess partnership, Frick seems to have been a somewhat shadowy presence, who, in the end seems to get the better of the relationship.

In 1912 the Del Mar Ranch was assessed at \$42,400. (9) Frick, being an astute buyer must have been aware of this when he acquired the land in April of 1912 from the Bender Brothers trustees. Although Frick's purchase price is unknown, it's doubtful he would have paid a great deal more than this. He then transfers the property to Del Mar Development Company in August of 1912. Frick is President of the company, R.H. Miller is Secretary and Burgess is involved at some level and records the transfer. Again, the financial particulars are unknown. Burgess' organization, R. N. Burgess Company with offices in San Francisco and Oakland handled the marketing of the property which began in July of 1912 and ran through, at least August 17th. Also in August a mortgage is taken out on the property with Western Mortgage and Guaranty Company which includes Frick, Burgess and Miller on its Board of Directors and Burgess as its President. One assumes this was all legal, moral and ethical, but subsequent events cause one to wonder if Frick and ". . . Burgess Company (were, indeed) doing all possible to promote the welfare of the colony." (16)

As mentioned earlier, 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 signed an agreement to buy the property for \$250,755. This being 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. Yet, it's hard to believe there was equal bargaining power between the Noshkins (Maria couldn't write her name, she made a mark) and the Frick-Burgess-Miller alliance. Further when the Del Mar Ranch was sold in 1941 to the Ohlson family the cost was around \$140,000. (9) The terms included assuming the mortgage taken out with Western Mortgage and a second mortgage held by a major stockholder of Del Mar Development. For Noshkin and the colonists the terms for the first five months were manageable, but became progressively more challenging from October 1913 onwards.

Despite their efforts, the colonists could not make the payments. A September 6, 1913 article in the Mendocino Beacon reported on the "Colonists Troubles". "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. Six hundred tons of hay have been baled there and four presses have been at work. Martin Smith went with his press from Point Arena, Ed, Chester and Ernest Olsen (sp), Hi McMillen and other balers have all got through and gone home, but who owns the hay is a question. The little school had seven pupils yesterday. Seven adults from the colony went down to Stewart's Point on business."

No one seems to know why Emil and his followers struck the deal they did or what Frick hoped to gain if he knew they would never be able to fulfill the financial obligations. Possibly Frick believed the Russians

were going to make good on the deal. Then when they faltered, he decided to take the property back rather than modify the terms. Perhaps Emil and his group believed they could make the purchase, but then had buyer's remorse and decided it would take too long and cost too much so they cut their losses and defaulted on the agreement. Or perhaps they just couldn't make the required payments. Through a series of inexplicable transactions over the next couple of years the property eventually ends up being owned by Walter Frick individually. Even this seemed somewhat inexplicable. According to his son (10) Frick's business dealings kept him from living there, he never seemed to be particularly fond of the area and it never returned a profit for him. He planted the hedgerows, attempted to again sell small parcels and finally settled for introducing sheep to the property.

The Noshkins and the other Russian colonists returned to Potrero Hill in San Francisco. Potrero Hill is where non-orthodox Russians tended to settle. Their homes were typically around Carolina, Rhode Island, DeHaro and Southern Heights streets. Orthodox Russians generally located in the Fillmore. In 1914 Emil and Mary are shown living at 37 Cotter Street in San Francisco, southwest of Potrero Hill. His occupation is indicated as soapmaker.

By 1920 the family is living and farming in the town of Elmira in Solano County, today it would be across Highway 80 from The Nut Tree. Since no information was found about the family in San Francisco Directories or elsewhere after 1914, it's thought they may have gone to Elmira in about 1915 and remained there through 1920. The motivation for the move here may have been relatives of Mary, the Shubin family, who were already established in the farming community which had attracted a number of Russian immigrant families. The seven youngest children accompanied them. Theodore/Fedor, Maria/Mary and Michael were all married by 1920. Michael, as previously noted, married a Russian girl who had also been among the Del Mar colonists. Unfortunately she dies very young in 1921. They had only one child, William, who is erroneously shown as Emil's son in the 1930 census. Vladimir, who would have been about 23, is the other child not shown with the family. Research has failed to trace Vladimir after his appearance on the Star of Persia passenger list.

In 1921 they are back in San Francisco at 1348 San Bruno Avenue on Potrero Hill. Emil shows no occupation, but son Alexander, now 17, is shown as a broom maker. By the 1920's the Potrero Hill area has grown into a substantial neighborhood of primarily Russian and Greek families. After the Bolshevik Revolution began in 1917 many more Russians left Russia. On the waterfront are iron works and shipbuilders

creating jobs for the community. A group of Presbyterian church women spearheaded the building of a community center which aided the Russian population with an adult



education curriculum, activities for youth like summer camps, counseling on various matters and other events for the community. It was called Neighborhood House, was designed by famous architect Julia Morgan, completed in 1922 and still serves the Potrero Hill community today. The picture on page 11 shows a gathering inside the structure in the 1920s. The man in the front row, second from the left bears a strong resemblance to Emil Noshkin. This would be in character with Emil who has proven to be a leader and who seems to have been committed to maintaining his Russian heritage and contributing to his community's well being.

Through 1926 the Noshkins continue to live at 1348 San Bruno Avenue on Potrero Hill. During this time Emil began working as an enameler. His son Theodore/Fedor was also employed in the same occupation. It's not certain how many of the children were living with them, but it does appear the majority of the family continued to live together. Most of the children are working; Nadia as a machine operator for the Pepsin Gum Company, Katherine as a milliner (hat maker), later a bookkeeper and stenographer, Benjamin a laborer then a clerk, Michael a laborer, a fireman and a printer, Victor a chauffeur and Luba/Love/Lavona a saleswoman. Vera is still in school. Sadly, in 1926 daughter Maria dies at age 34, leaving six children ages 2 through 12 and her husband.

In 1927 the family moves to 101 Justin in Bernal Heights, south of Potrero Hill. Both Emil and Theodore are working for Progress Plating Company on Gough Street, San Francisco. By 1928 Emil has become the Manager. The 1930 census has the family at 648 Vienna Street, southwest of Potrero Hill. Six of the children are with Emil and Mary including Michael and his son William. Tragically, son Theodore dies in 1931 of tuberculosis. Emil retires and by 1935 he and Mary have moved to 371 Oak, not too far from Alamo Square. They are still there in 1945 and they spend the rest of their lives in San Francisco. Emil dies in 1953 and Mary in 1960.

R.N. Burgess began developing an area at the foot of Mt. Diablo in Contra Costa County for summer homes. World War I put a damper on his plans and in 1919 he went bankrupt. Walter Frick acquired most of the property and he began negotiating to sell parts for what would become Mt. Diablo State Park. These negotiations lasted into the 1930s because of Frick's hard driving business approach. He softened some after the 1929 stock market crash hurt him financially. Frick's financial difficulties followed him into the 1930's, his second wife files for divorce in 1933 and by 1936 he was having health problems. Frick's final negotiation to sell his Diablo properties to the Park system was consummated in February of 1937, but he wasn't present for it. He died on January 15, 1937. (10)

James Truslow Adams wrote of the American dream in his book "The Epic of America" in 1931. He described it as; "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement." "It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream . . . in which each man and each woman shall be . . . recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position."

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HISTORIC SITES ON SEA RANCH
By Harry Lindstrom
The Sea Ranch Archives Committee
July 21, 2012

The list generally runs from north to south. Watch for more presentations by The Sea Ranch Archives Committee highlighting many of these sites and the people who lived and worked around them. We are also planning some type of commemorative event(s) to make people more aware of what went on here before our wonderful community was created. These will be presented when The Sea Ranch's 50th anniversary is celebrated from 2014-2015.

1 . The Gualala Mill was located across the bridge, in Mendocino County, below the highway, at the bend in the river. Although not on The Sea Ranch, it played a part in the early history of our area. There was a ferry there before any bridges, Bihler was an investor, the Benders had contractual agreements with the mill, Knipp and Stengel supplied it with beef and mill workers for Del Mar came from it after it burned. There is a good view of the area from Gualala Point County Park (1a). The visitors center (1b) in the park has great exhibits and pictures on logging.

2. Gualala Point – Site of World War II bombing range (along Rock Cod) for training Navy pilots.

3. Salal Cove where Salal Creek empties into the ocean was a Pomo site called “Seeton”. Salal creek extends across the highway and becomes Pomo Creek. The creek's trails led to a major Pomo village named “Kubahmoi” on the Gualala River at Rock Pile Creek.

4. Robert Rutherford/Joe Tongue Barn Site (northwest corner of Halcyon and Highway 1. Also the location of where Valentine Foresti and the Filosi family lived and farmed. The area was used for dairy farming, grain and orchards.

5. Possible site of Joe Tongue's landing (the end of Fish Rock).

6. Robert Rutherford's homesite (Deer Trail and West Wind) and orchard (6a – around Fawn).

7. Podsakoff's grave (bluff at the end of Sea Stack).

8. Del Mar Landing

9. Del Mar Mill, the steam plant and the buildings which surrounded it used in mill operations.

10. Mill worker/Russian housing (around Starboard Close and Windswept).

11. Approximate route of the mill railroad along Leeward.

12. Del Mar Saloon/Russian Schoolhouse site.

13. Del Mar Store site.

14. Old Barn which is to be renovated. It has been referred to as the mill foreman's barn and the store warehouse. Located north of the Del Mar tennis courts or, from the highway, it's behind red gate 20.

15. Mill manager's house/Frick summer home/Ohlson's first house site north of Ohlson's second house, now the Del Mar Center.
16. Del Mar schoolhouse.
17. Bull Barn remnants across the highway from the schoolhouse.
18. Klamath sinking site at the end of Sea Drift.
19. Brettnacher/Robinson home and orchard site. Behind the Eucalyptus trees across from Leeward Spur.
20. One Eyed Jacks.
21. Sheep pens.
22. First "settlement" – Hugal, Hageler, Bihler, then Adam Knipp and Christian Stengel lived there. North end of Rams Horn Reach, north of the Eucalyptus crown. There had been a grist mill along the ravine which was also a butchering site for cattle.
23. Adam Knipp/Chris Stengel barn and out buildings. Also the Ohlson ranch house. Knipp, Stengel and the Ohlson family are probably the longest term and most successful occupants of The Sea Ranch property.
24. Army World War II Radar Base located around Drover's Close.
25. Kenkoku Maru grounding on Black Point Beach.
26. Black Point Settlement/Bihler Landing – Sea Ranch lodge property.