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Portion of: NORTH OF THE GOLDEN GATE
BY Kate Feild

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Four leagues north of Point Reyes, where the county of Marin meets that of Sonoma, lies the little bay of Bodega, where Bodega y Quadra landed on October 3d, 1775. Thus within a coast line of twenty miles Cabrillo, Drake, Viscaino, and Bodega y Quadra made their discoveries in the new world, and left to Russia the honor of establishing the first settlement. Bodega Bay was originally taken possession of by Alexander Koskoff in 1811, on the plea that he had been refused a supply of water at Yerba Bueno, and that he had obtained by right of purchase from the Indians all the land lying between Point Reyes and Point Arena and for a distance three leagues inland. To work the Russians went with a will. Six miles from Bodega they built houses, fenced fields and grew grain, which they shipped from Bodega Bay in their own vessels. The sons of Spain looked on with scowling brows. To protect themselves from threatened attack the Muscovites explored the coast and north of Bodega found meadow and cove and beach well adapted for Russian headquarters. Here was Fort Ross established. In those days the fort consisted of a square enclosure one hundred varas each way. On diagonal corners, one facing the ocean and the other the mountains, were octagonal block houses of hewn logs with embrasures, each furnished with six eight-pounder pieces of artillery. A large building stood at the main entrance, where a sentinel was always on guard and where six cannon were stationed. Other cannon were kept at the house of the comandante, and at headquarters there were seventy stand of arms. Within the enclosure were fifty-nine buildings, including barracks, warehouses and a Greek Church. Walls and buildings were of wood, strong enough to resist Indian arrows. Beyond the walls were other structures, among them being two mills, one driven by water and the other by wind, a capital tannery, a blacksmith shop, and a ship-yard, where four vessels and many launches were built; indeed, here were launched the first sea-going craft constructed in California. East of the fort and

across the gulch is said to have stood a church used by the humbler colonists, and near by lay the cemetery of never more than fifty graves. A farm of two thousand acres was under fence, and much more land was cultivated without being thus protected. One mile away from the coast forests abounded, and the first lumber ever made with a saw north of San Francisco Bay was produced by the Muscovite invader. Stumps of redwoods denote the early destruction, and around them shoots have sprung up to the height of fifty and sixty feet, with a diameter that fits them for the remorseless axe.

Russia's first intention was to obtain from California the cereals necessary for her people further north, and incidentally to still further prosecute the fur trade; but on account of complaints from the Comandante of San Francisco the attempt at agriculture was abandoned. On the mountain side, however, back of Fort Ross, an orchard of four hundred trees and a vineyard of seven hundred stocks were successfully planted. Officially, the Spaniards were always jealous of the Russians, and between 1816 and 1818 the expulsion of the latter was much discussed; but as the trade with the Russians increased yearly and benefitted the country, opposition took no active form, and the Muscovites sheltered ships of the Russian-American Company every winter. Better customers than the Russians the Pacific coast never had. They paid promptly for all purchases made, and gave to the Spanish Government one-half of the skins taken in hunting. Often as many as 80,000 seal-skins were collected at the Farralones in a single season. It was Russia, too, that sent the first scientists to the North Pacific. In 1816 the ship "Rurick" entered San Francisco Bay having on board several distinguished naturalists, one of them being Dr. Eschscholz, after whom the yellow California poppy has been named *Eschscholzia*.

When hunting and trade ceased to be profitable Russia had no further use for her California colony, and on July 27th, 1841, Kostromitinoff sat in the house of Gen. Vallejo at Sonoma endeavoring to negotiate terms of evacuation. The Spanish took too high ground for the Russian. Vallejo insisted that inasmuch as the houses at Ross had been built of Mexican timber and stood on Mexican soil, they therefore rightly belonged to Mexico. The Russian refused to entertain such a romantic idea and straightway sold the entire property to Captain John A. Sutter for \$31,000. On January 1st, 1842, after a sojourn of twenty-eight years, the Russians returned to our Alaska. Not long after their departure wild oats grew rank where grain once reared its head, and often stood ten feet high. This were the Indians wont to fire, and thus were destroyed houses, fences and the people's church. Nothing remains but the officers' quarters, the two forts, one fast crumbling to decay and leaning to the west, as though asking to be saved by those who had sailed away never to come back, the other transformed into a pig-sty and not to be approached by dainty shoes.

The chapel has been ruthlessly turned into a stable and not more than a dozen graves can be traced upon the hill. All are nameless! The orchard of five acres, containing apple, prune and cherry trees gray with neglected age, numbers to-day but fifty-nine trees. Of prunes not one is left, yet it is said that all the old California stock of German prunes came from seed produced at Fort Ross.

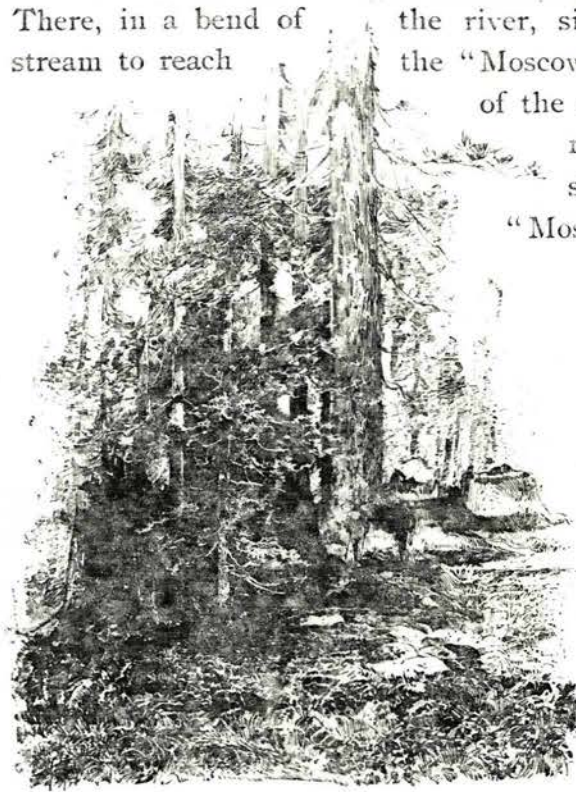
Thus have these best of foreign colonists passed away, leaving in their wake nothing but a memory. The American takes the Russian's place, scorns to preserve historic relics, turns "Timbertoe's" residence into an hotel and converts a fort into a profitable ranch!

No need to linger o'er the prosaic present, and turing southward the sentimental tourist is driven for six miles over the "coast grade road." Cut out of the mountain's side, with the sea not far below, it winds around the rock-bound coast, now down, now up, with here a gulch where Russians once grew wheat, and there a "Gunshot Point" where the notorious literary highwayman, "Black Bart," once plied his adopted calling. For six miles the picturesque road skirts the coast; for six miles the eye looks, first upon the Pacific Ocean with its breakers dashing over rocks whose only visitors are birds and seal, and then upon the precipitous sides of high hills inhabited solely by goats, coyotes and winged things. At last, ranch houses invade the solitude, and soon begins a beautiful descent that leads to the mouth of the Russian River, called, "Slawianska" by the Muscovites and "San Sebastian" by old Californians. Thus no sooner is the ocean lost to view than this pretty stream, with its twists and turns, its islands and wooded hills, offers a balm to latest memory. Here the sportsman's holiday is spent. Here fish and game do congregate, despite the axe of the lumberman, that has levelled many a glorious redwood and will level many more. The voice of the saw sings the music of the century, and Duncan's Mills, the terminus of the stage route, owes its origin and prosperity to the noble redwoods that have been sacrificed for the benefit of ungrateful man.



OLD RUSSIAN SAW-MILL, FORT ROSS.

There, in a bend of
stream to reach



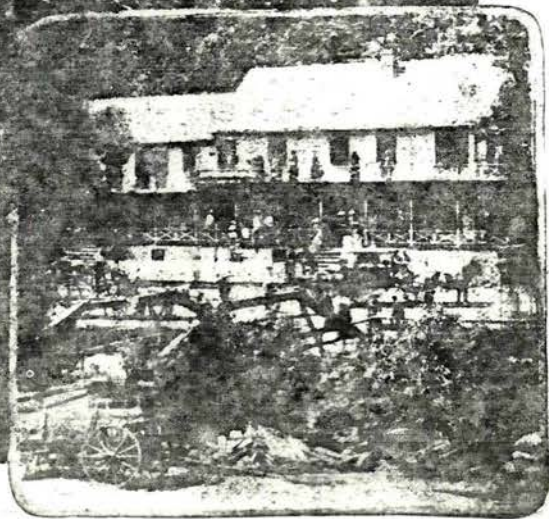
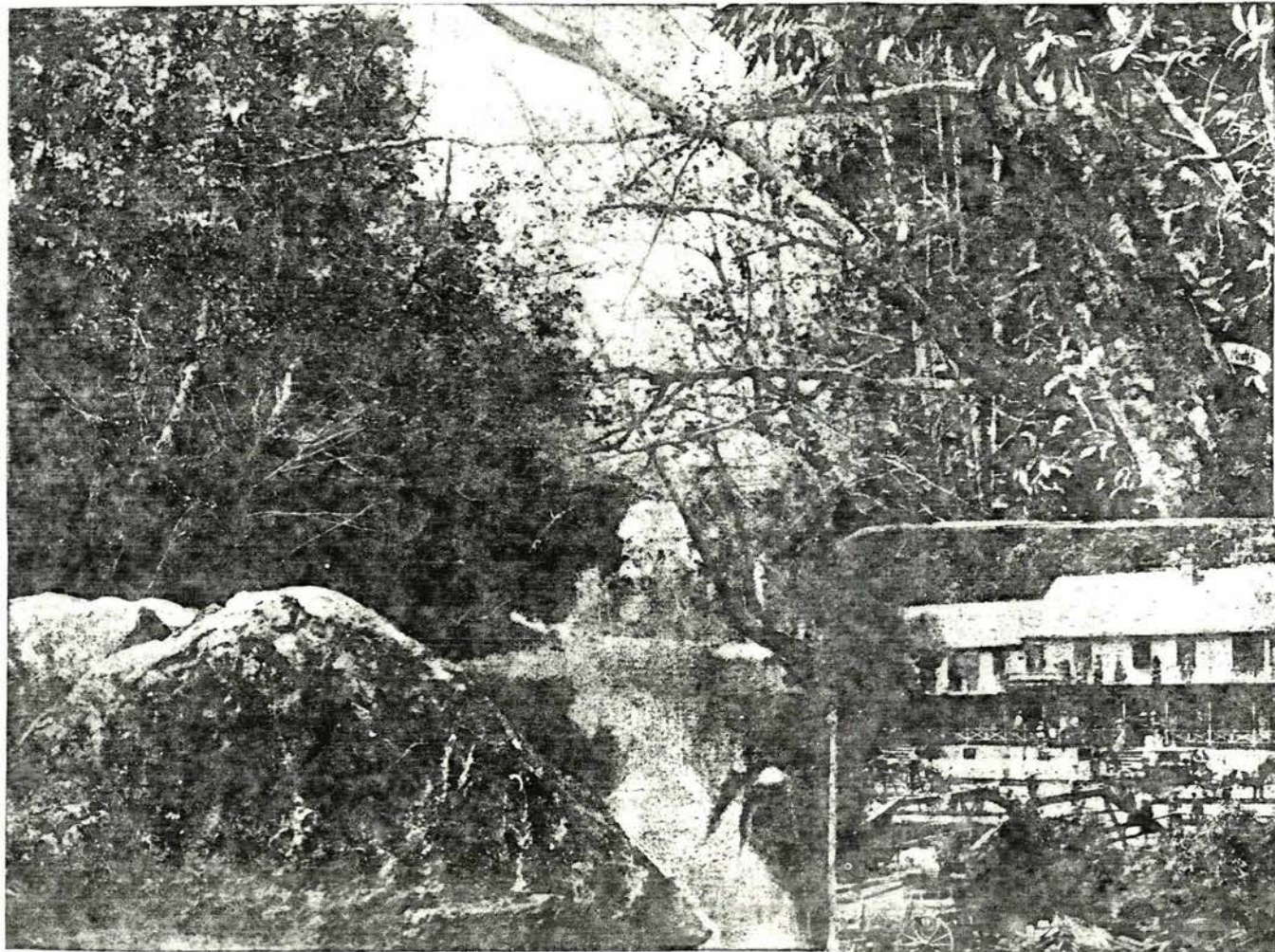
REDWOOD STUMPS AND NEW GROWTH.

the river, sit town and mill, and one has only to wade the not too deep
the "Moscow" of America, a pretty country-seat with such a full-length view
of the river as can be excelled only still further east on the beautiful
road to Guerneville. When beheld from a high point, mountain,
sky and water seem to meet and mingle at this same sylvan
"Moscow."

No steam craft invades the rippling shoals of Russian River;
nor can the tiniest boat push up Austin Creek, a beautiful
tributary, the Mecca of numberless campers and of San
Francisco's unique Bohemian Club, which yearly at midnight
with imposing ceremonies buries "dull care" at the foot of
towering trees and by the light of flashing flambeaux. The
equestrian can pick his way over its pebbly bed, wading one
moment in crystal water where trout glide to and fro, the
next moment ploughing through sand or stumbling over
rocks—for what? To gaze upon primeval redwoods that
frequently shut out the sun. Some stand on the brink of
the creek, others have fallen across its bosom, and from
the horizontal trunks baby redwoods have sprung—Nature
only knows how—standing as erect and self-reliant as though

their roots were firmly planted in the ground many feet below. Once or twice the big trees of
Mariposa are recalled by the sight of trunks thirty feet in girth. Bush and brake form arches
overhead, and tiny streams add their musical mite to the creek as it courses to the sea, wild flowers
and berries bending low to kiss the waters in their flight.

Beside Austin Creek, ten miles from Duncan's Mills, stands the hunting box of Cazadero,
where redwoods come to an end. Here is heard the snort of the iron horse that bears the forest
to the town, and here begins the journey of the North Pacific Coast Railroad from the redwoods
of Sonoma County to Sausalito by the sea. Back to Duncan's Mills, through the same forest that
makes the glory of the region, the "narrow-gauge" speeds its tortuous way, crossing the Russian
River over a wooden bridge six hundred feet long; climbing, climbing, zigging and zagging, around
ravines, over spurs, across the highest trestle in California—one hundred and thirty feet above creek
and cañon—out of Sonoma County into Marin, through the first long tunnel, measuring two thousand
six hundred and twenty-nine feet, down, down to sea level, skirting the shore of Tomales Bay for fifteen
miles. * * *



CAZADERO—LOOKING UP THE CREEK.