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Story of The Sea Ranch

The Story of
The Sea Ranch

By RICHARD DILLON

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION BY
MARGOT PATTERSON DOSS

PUBLISHED BY
OCEANIC PROPERTIES, INC.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We of *The Sea Ranch* are deeply grateful to Richard Dillon and Margot Patterson Doss and to Lawton and Alfred Kennedy for this distinguished contribution to our project.

FREDERICK SIMPICH, *President*
Oceanic Properties, Inc.

For Lawrence Halprin
from the authors
R. H. Dillon

Lawton Kennedy
Alfred L. Kennedy

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INTRODUCTION

On the western edge of this continent we call North America, the Coast Range of mountains for eons uncounted has run down to the sea in splendor. No man seeing it for the first time, has been unmoved. That imposing length of it which lies within Sonoma County, California, includes sweeping moors, cypress-defined meadows, forested glens, sickle-shaped beaches, little dogholes where the steam schooners picked up their cargoes of redwood logs in no small peril; off-shore seastacks where the sea lions and otters play today as they played when the Russians and Aleuts hunted; blue rivermouths where the steelhead and salmon glitter in the tourmaline water; imposing cliffs, small coves, secret caves and the mysterious frontier of the ocean itself.

Hands off! This beauty is in trust to the ages! The everliving Pacific seems to say. In old Rancho German (pronounced Herrmann), the fourteen miles of coastline which has become *The Sea Ranch*, men of the past have heeded this call. As the historian Richard H. Dillon shows us so expertly in this brief history, where they imposed their will upon wild nature, it has been with respect.

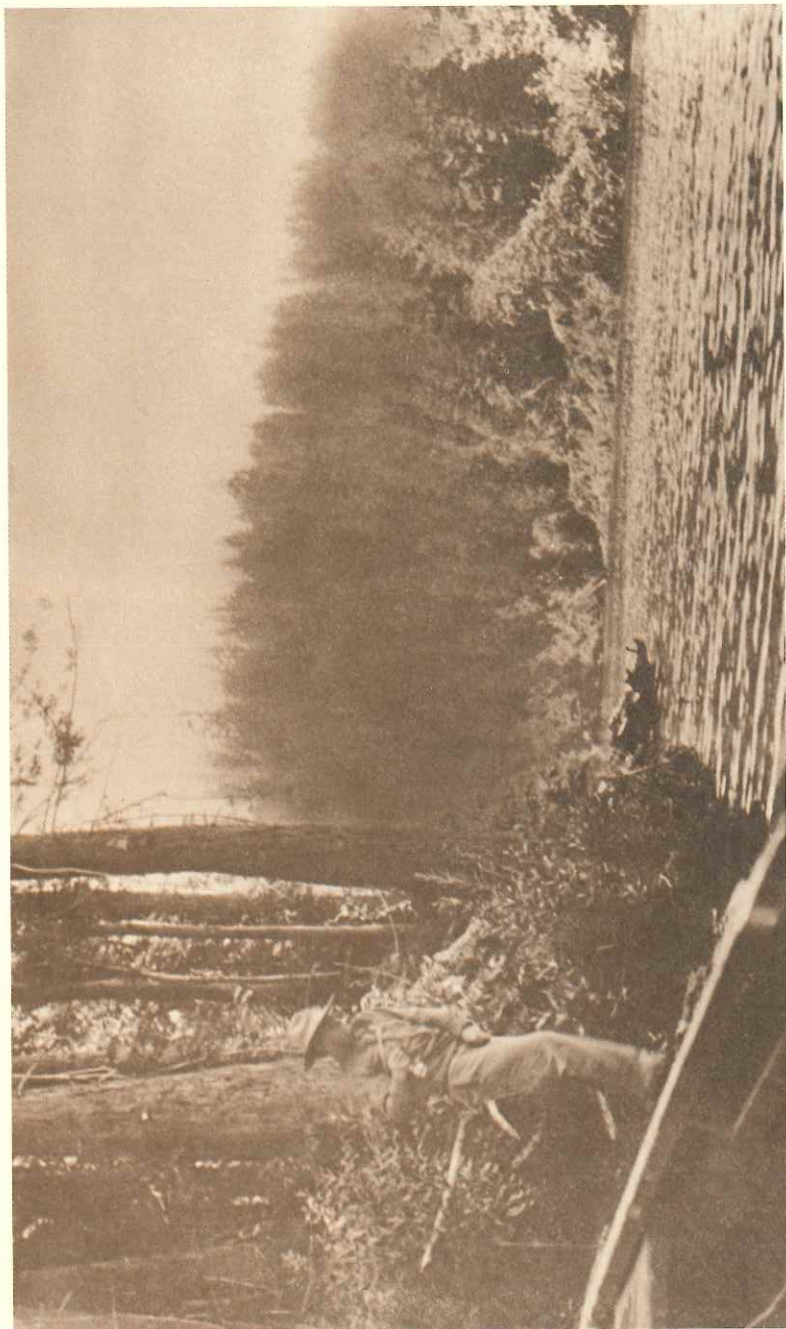
The hand of man lies lightly on the terrain. And so, believe master planner and landscape architect Lawrence Halprin and his associates, who are guiding its contemporary evolution, it should continue to lie. This is no mean achievement in our time. Frederick Simpich, president, and Alfred Boeke, vice-president and planning director of Oceanic Properties, would not say so themselves, but it is quite possible their sensitivity to the landscape will make *The Sea Ranch* the outstanding community being created in the United States today. If it is, an integrity, a faithfulness to the land, is the key. Charles Moore, Dean of Architecture of Yale, and his associate, William Turnbull, designers of the award-winning condominium apartments, have kept this faith. So have Joseph Esherick and his staff who created the unusual sod-roofed demonstration houses.

It was no less a Titan than George Washington who asked "Is there a standard to which the wise and honest can repair?" The answer divides the seers, the ethical, the professional ruthlessly, without equivocation from the sheep, the exploiters, the hacks. It is of course, "Yes, there is a standard." The standard is excellence. These sound like high-flown words. They are also challenging, even as the Sonoma coastline is challenging. The challenge makes a dramatic stage for living and playing. As you come along Wonderful Highway One, through some of the bold-

est coast this side of Scotland, the unspoken wish in the mind is that it remain unspoiled. Not necessarily unchanged, you think, if you believe in the ultimate goodness of man, but not smirched, not devastated. At *The Sea Ranch* this dream is coming about.

MARGOT PATTERSON DOSS

September 7, 1965



Irving Shepard, Jack London's Nephew

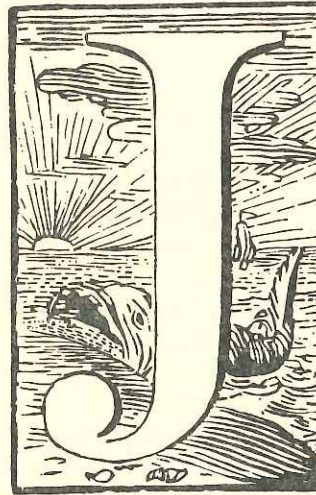
Jack London, whose spirit is embodied in the very name of The Sea Ranch spent many hours fishing the Gualala River for the fighting steelhead.



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ABOVE: *The Pomo village of Kowishal, at Black Point, where The Sea Ranch headquarters stand today, looked like this before the white man arrived on the scene except that slabs of redwood bark were used on the Indian houses rather than the scrap lumber used in this rancheria. At least one of these old style Indian houses can be seen at Kashia, the Stewart's Point Indian Reservation not far from The Sea Ranch.*

BELOW: *The most important structure in The Sea Ranch's ancient Pomo village of Kowishal, or in any other Redwood Coast Indian settlement, was the temescal or earthen sweat house, half-hospital and half-church to the Indian.*



JUST as *The Sea Ranch* occupies a coastal slice of California's richest history, so also does it occupy a section of the last frontier of Spain and Mexico. Long before this stretch of shore was Del Mar Ranch, and before it was Sonoma's Salt Point Township, it was *El Rancho German* (the German Ranch), so named because it was an old Mexican land grant presented to a German, Ernest Rufus, by the last Mexican Governor of California, Pio Pico in 1846. The German Ranch was sometimes called the Arroyo Valala Ranch, Gualala often being rendered Valale, then, supposedly for an Indian chief of the area known as Valale, or

according to Father Mariano Payeras of the chain of Franciscan missions in California, Chief Valli-ela. Others say Rufus named the river and the *rancho* for the Walhalla of Teutonic mythology and even meant "*German*" to stand for the Teutonic hero, Hermann. But the land grant is important historically and geographically because it was the northernmost land grant of Mexico's Alta California coast. There were two land grants over the line in Mendocino County, the Garcia and Richardson claims; both were declared invalid by the U.S. Government.

Ernest Rufus arrived in California about 1844, to join the Swiss empire builder Captain John Sutter at his fortress-town of New Helvetia, now Sacramento. Sutter made Rufus one of his chief lieutenants and drillmaster for his Indian troops. When a revolution broke out that year in California, Sutter marched to Los Angeles in support of Governor Manuel Micheltorena. His crack unit was a company of 100 Indian soldiers commanded by Rufus. It was not much of a *war* but the rebels won and Sutter and his men were taken prisoner. Luckily for Captain Rufus they were granted clemency by the revolutionary leaders, Jose Castro and Juan B. Alvarado, and allowed to return to the north, while ex-Governor Micheltorena was sent back to Mexico and exile. Rufus must have been liked by his erstwhile enemies, for the new governor, Pio Pico, granted him first the Cazadores Ranch in the Sacramento Valley and second, *The Sea Ranch* property. In 1847 Captain Rufus sold the German Ranch, or at least parts of it, to Carlos F. Glein and Henry Hagler, but he remained on the Sonoma coast until almost the 1880's.

But long before Ernest Rufus first saw the light of day in far-off Baden, the corner of Sonoma County trending northwardly from Stewart's Point to the mouth of the Gualala River was the site of an important settlement. It was neither Spanish or Mexican, nor was it Russian or American. It was Pomo. At Black Point, the very heart of today's *Sea Ranch* property, stood the Indian village of Kowishal. South of Kowishal at modern Stewart's Point lay another town, Danaga. Inland lay two more Pomo towns, Hibuwi on the Middle Fork of the Gualala and Lachupda on the upper waters of the North Fork. The Pomos preferred the open coast to the shadowy redwoods an eighth of a mile inland from the cliffs. The shady forest discouraged most game, and there were no acorns to eat. The coastal plain about *The Sea Ranch* and the scattered meadows, called strangely *prairies* on the Redwood Coast, suited them much better than the forest itself.

Hundreds of years before Spanish or Filipino eyes saw the Sonoma coast from the high-pooped galleons making their run from Cape Mendocino to Acapulco, this was a meeting ground of peoples. Here the Southwestern Pomos of Kowishal mingled with their kin, the Southern Pomos and the Northern Pomos, when they were not at war with the latter. While the first *gringos* called all California Indians *Diggers*, because they mistakenly believed that they lived by grubbing roots, they really belong to many tribes and smaller units according to language. The Southwestern or Gualala Pomos spoke a slightly different dialect from their neighbors, the Central, Northern and Southern Pomos, but all of them belonged to a far-flung island of the Hokan people, most of whom lived inland in the area of Mount Shasta and in the Siskiyou.

It was in the field of arts and crafts that the prehistoric people of *The Sea Ranch* excelled. They made drums like those of most Indian tribes but they also fashioned distinctive, large foot drums. They were as skilled in feather work as Hawaiians; they worked all kinds of shell, and no Indians in California ever equaled the Pomos in basketry. So proficient were they in handcrafts that a village like Kowishal produced specialists in basket making or net weaving, bead drilling, bow and arrow carving and the flaking of obsidian arrow points. They developed a great variety of baskets, using almost a dozen different techniques of coiling and twining. Sometimes they feathered them or added small sea shells for decorations. They manufactured containers,

sieves, storage hampers, hats and even tightly woven baskets to serve as cooking pots.

Like most California Indians the Southwestern Pomos of Black Point and environs made acorn meal or *pinole* their staple. The early American explorer and ethnologist, Stephen Powers, found that old-timers among the Pomos still preferred acorn mush to the sweetest wheat bread of the whites. Acorn mush was hard to make, since the tannic acid in the shelled acorns, ground into a powder on a metate with a stone *mano* or pestle, had to be leached out by percolating water through it into hollows in the sand. Only then was it edible. But the end result of all this labor was a rich and oily bread which Powers described as delicious; usually the Pomos burnt it black. More often the flour was used to make mush rather than bread, it was then cooked in baskets, using hot stones.

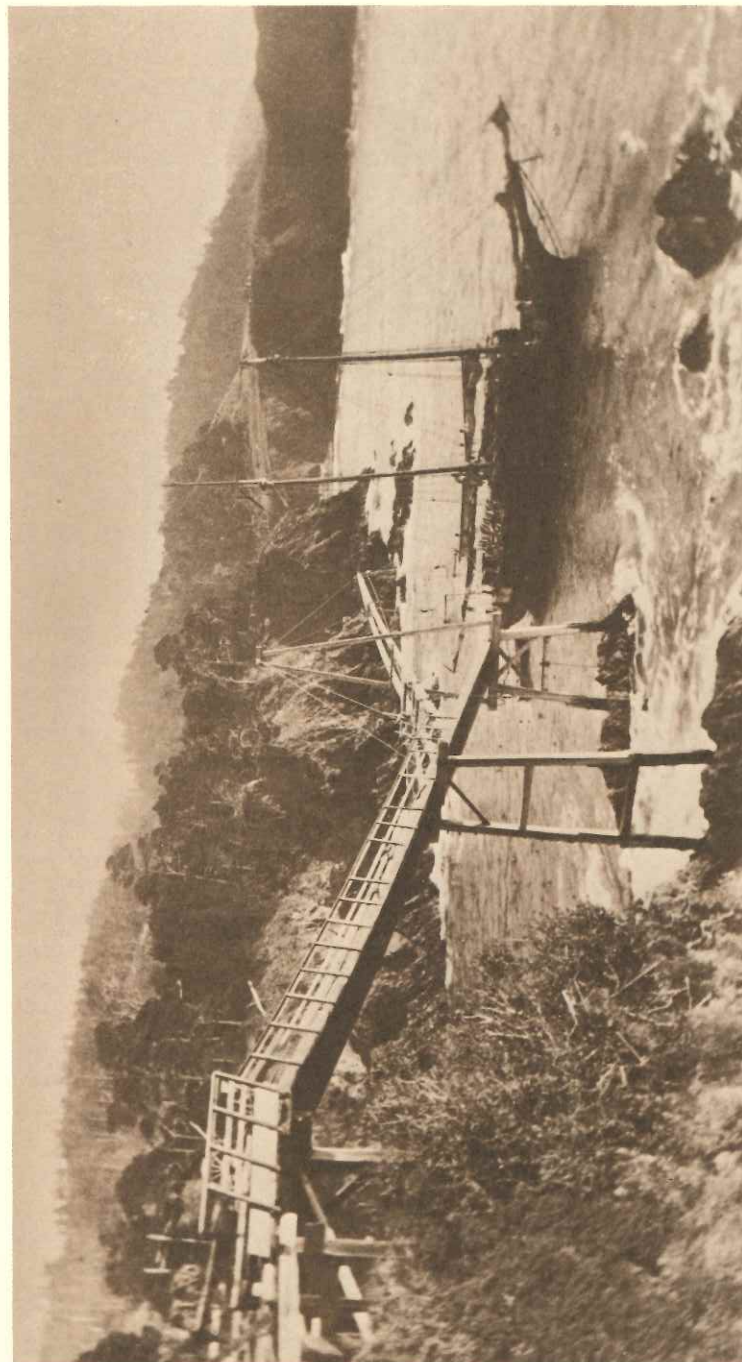
Undoubtedly the Pomos dug roots but they also hunted, fished and gleaned nuts, acorns and berries for subsistence. They were able to take deer and bear with their bows and arrows, and sea-shore combing brought them clams, mussels, surf fish and even sea urchins. Such delicacies of today's California city life as abalone and crab were everyday foods to the citizens of Kowishal. They "harvested" the silver salmon which ran up the Gualala from October to December, and then switched to the steelhead which ran from December to February. Since salmon sometimes weighed 65 pounds, life could be very easy during a good season. Abalones, the most delicious of all shellfish, were to be had for the mere picking up, or rather, prying up. There was no need to wait for a minus tide at Black Point in Pomo days. Like the Japanese, the Black Point folk also had a yen for seaweed. Ocean fish, salmon, bass, ling cod, halibut, red snapper and rock cod, were taken with hook and line or with dip nets and harpoons. Freshwater fish were taken by stunning them in shallow pools with poisonous *soaproot* or by using wiers, dams and basketry fishtraps. In bad years the Pomos sometimes had to fall back on grasshoppers for food. Their hunting technique was a little bit like that of the buffalo hunters of the Great Plains. They would make a "surround" but instead of closing in to shoot at the locusts they would light a ring of fire around them and fan it inwards until they would find, in the center, a heap of hoppers roasted as crisp as peanuts.

In times of plenty *The Sea Ranch* Pomos lazed about in the sun, telling and retelling stories or playing games. If they fell ill,

they either called in the *shaman* or doctored themselves. In the latter case, they would often inhale the smoke from burning coyote dung. This cured headaches, or so they believed. A poison oak infection would be rubbed with soaproot powder. They applied poultices of buckeye bark to snakebites. For tuberculosis or rheumatism, there was little they could do but depend on magic and draw a bullsnake (big medicine!) back and forth across the victim's stomach to drive out the demon afflicting the patient.

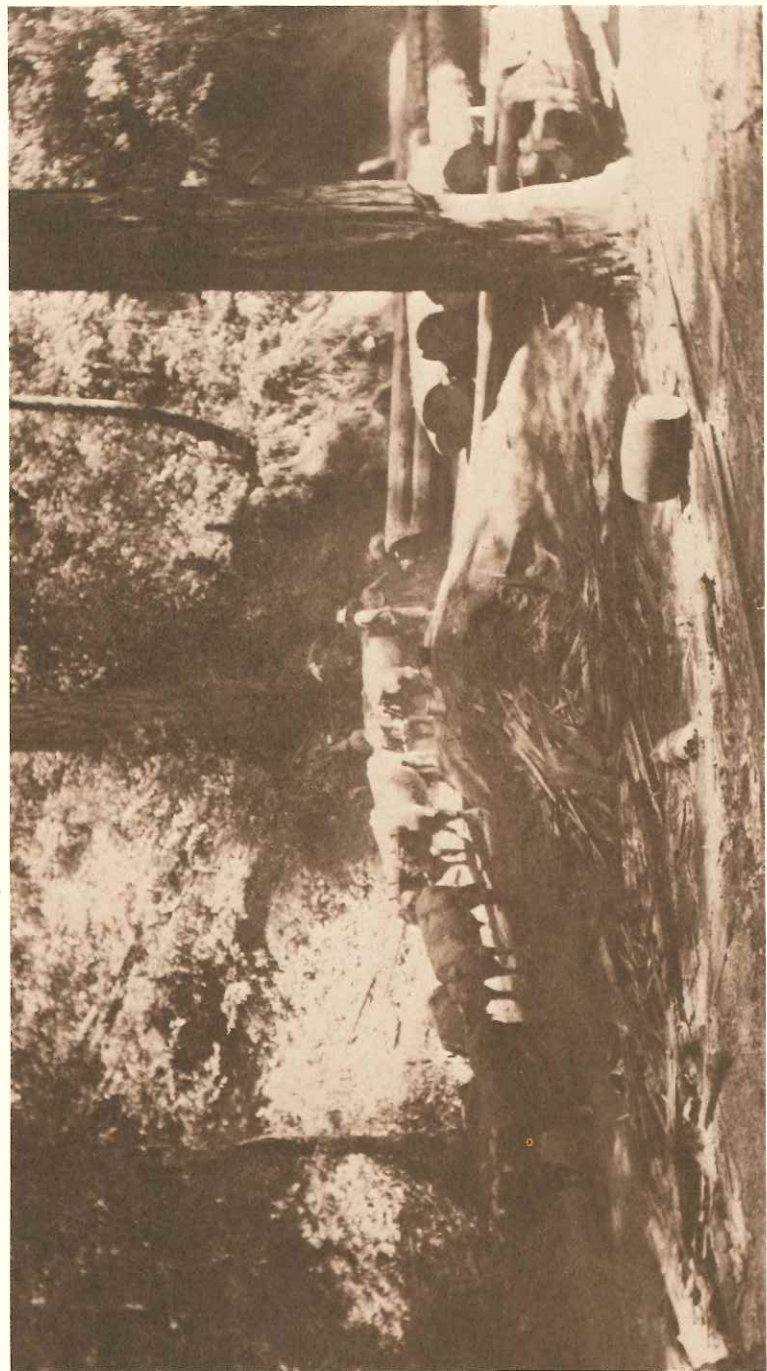
The Pomos believed in many spirits, assigning one for example to each of the cardinal points of the compass and to prominent mountains and the high points of such ranges as Miller Ridge, behind Black Point, or Brushy Ridge, north of today's Annapolis and adjacent to Grasshopper Creek where the Pomos used to make their locust "roundups." But their major deity was a Thunderbird-like god called Thunder Man. He had a white skin and long hair and wore a costume of buzzard feathers and wings. He carried a colored, feathered basket hidden under his wings. When he flapped his turkey vulture wings he made thunder. Lightning bolts, rare on this mild coast, were the infrequent glimpses the Pomos caught of the bright feathers of his medicine basket.

The Gualala is one of those rare rivers of North America which flow north. But abruptly towards its mouth, it makes a right-angle turn to the west to cut a transverse cañon through the Coast Range to the Pacific. No one knows what European first saw its mouth. Perhaps it was Sir Francis Drake, conning his way down the coast to escape the "stynking fogges" of the Pacific Northwest. If he saw the Gualala, he failed to mention it for posterity, and he eventually passed Black Point and Stewart's Point to anchor as some authorities seem to think at a point originally designated by George Davidson as Drake's Bay on the Marin County coast, for purposes of careening the Golden Hind. Others, however, are just as firmly convinced that Drake entered San Francisco Bay and remained there for some time and erected the cairn on which the *Plate of Brass* was placed at Point San Quentin, where it was found in 1936. On this plate of brass was inscribed, "Be it known unto all men by these presents, June 17, 1579, By the grace of God and in the name of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth of England, and her successors forever, I take possession of this Kingdom whose King and people resign their right and title in the whole land unto Her Majesty's keeping, now



San Francisco Maritime Museum

For many years, Black Point was called Fisherman's Bay Post Office (location of The Sea Ranch Store) but the actual cove of that name lay at Stewart Point. Their sailing schooners loaded from the Stewart's Point chute.



Roy Graves Collection

Before the railroads came to Gualala, loggers had to depend on bull teams to get the timber to the mill. Even when the iron horses chugged along The Sea Ranch coast and up the Gualala, bull teams were used to collect logs and bring them to the right-of-way.

named by me and to be known unto all men as Nova Albion."

Even before Drake, the Spanish may have skirted the coast of what would become the German Ranch but it is unlikely that they landed. Although they sailed the treasure ships called *Manila galleons* from the Philippines to Mexico via Cape Mendocino from 1565 until 1815, they tended to keep far offshore, distrusting the rocky coast of Mendocino and Sonoma counties. And rightly so, for the Portuguese commander of the *San Agustine*, Sebastian Cermeño, saw his galleon break up in Drake's Bay in 1595, and the *Espiritu Santo* and the *Jesus Maria* were almost shipwrecked at Cape Mendocino in 1604. But if the Spaniards and Manilamen of the treasure galleons did not actually see Black Point and other headlands with their sea glasses, they almost certainly got their bearings from redwood-covered Miller Ridge, just east of the main fork of the Gualala and directly behind Black Point and Kowishal. This we know for sure, because the historian of the Philippines, Antonio de Morga, described the galleons' route thus: "Then [after Cape Mendocino] the coast is discovered and it is very high and clear land. *Without losing sight of land*, the ship coasts along it with northwest, north-northwest and north winds, which generally prevail on the coast, blowing, by day, toward the land and, by night, toward the sea again."

As the 19th century dawned, while the last of the Spanish galleons were sailing down the Sonoma coast, Czarist Russia began to cast covetous eyes on the Indian Eden north of the Golden Gate. In 1806 the Czar's Chamberlain, Nikolai Rezanof, visited the Presidio of San Francisco in search of food supplies for his hungry people at the Russian-American Fur Company settlement of Sitka, Alaska. In the spring of 1812, the Company's ship *Chirikov* landed Ivan Kuskov and a party of Russian fur traders and Aleutian hunters, to found a settlement on the coast some 20 miles south of Black Point. On May 12, Kuskov began to build a fortress and when he dedicated it on August 30 it was a strong, stockaded bastion with two-story blockhouses mounting cannon. It would stand firm guard over the settlement of 59 buildings and dominate the local Indians and awe the Spaniards to the south. Trade was discouraged by the Spanish authorities but there was smuggling galore between those *Fuerte de los Rusos* and the settlers of the San Francisco Bay area. However, even this was not enough to make Fort Ross a success. Both farming and shipbuilding proved disappointing, so in 1841 the Russians

sold the entire settlement to Captain John Sutter. But before they did so, they had decimated the once enormous herds of sea otters and seals which ranged the Sonoma coast. It is most likely that the Eskimo-like Aleuts beached their skin *bidarkas*, or sea-going kayaks, at coves in the lee of such promontories as Del Mar Point and Black Point to set up seal and otter hunting camps.

John Sutter's right-hand man John Bidwell, took charge of Fort Ross after the Russians left. There were some 200 Indians and half-breeds there at the time. In 1845 Bidwell was replaced by another of Sutter's German friends, William Benitz. Sutter had removed all the portable property to New Helvetia but Benitz bought the buildings and four leagues of land from Manuel Torres and made good money raising potatoes in the area to sell to Sierra miners. He also quarried stone for some of San Francisco's buildings and streets. In 1867 he sold the old Fort to James Dixon of Marin County. By 1898 it had passed into the hands of George Washington Call whose descendants still live adjacent to the old Russian Commander's headquarters. Call, who was Grizzly Adam's partner in the mountain man's wild animal menagerie in San Francisco, finally sold the old Russian fort to the State of California. It is now held by the State Beaches and Parks Division.

But the Russians left their mark behind on the Sonoma coast. Perhaps some of the Aleuts had a try at whaling off Stewart's Point Island, Del Mar Point, or Gualala Point. In any case Americans continued the hunt for sea otters and pelagic seals and soon made whaling a Redwood coast industry as well. Even today whales by the score can be seen with the naked eye making their way northwards in March, and south in the opposite season just as they have migrated for thousands of years. Black Point itself makes a fine viewpoint. A hundred years ago their number like that of the buffalo of the Plains seemed inexhaustible. By the mid-1850's shore whaling was a profitable practice along the coast north of San Francisco. Eventually there were major whaling stations at Bolinas Bay, Trinidad and Humboldt Bay. All of them, particularly the first two, sent boats along *The Sea Ranch's* coast. The shore whalers operated from any convenient cove, backed by high ground where they could post a watch. Doubtless, short-lived whaling camps sprang up on *The Sea Ranch* land. In the cove they would beach their whaleboats and set up their iron try pots for rendering the blubber into oil.

A man kept constant guard with a glass for gray and humpback whales offshore. Perhaps they used the half-mile long straight beach four miles north of Black Point and three miles from Gualala River. It was backed by sand dunes high enough for a lookout. At the sign of the tell-tale cloud of spray drifting to fragments with the prevailing wind the lookout would cry, "*Thar she blows!*" and the two crews of six men each, would dash for their boats to haul them into the crashing surf. Shore whaling boats always operated in pairs, for the dangerous flukes of the giant mammal could smash a craft to kindling and leave the boatsteerer and his oarsmen at the mercy of the sea. Although the men were Americans technically, most of them were Portuguese from the Azores Islands experienced already in Atlantic shore whaling.

The closest of the major stations to the Black Point coast was the one owned by the Bolinas Bomb-lance Whaling Association. It was capitalized at \$100,000, no mean sum a century and more ago. This whaling station prided itself on the possession of the most modern equipment available, from the deadly bomb-lance, succeeding the old hand-thrown harpoons and lances, to the steam engines used for hoisting carcasses, and equipment for refining the oil. It had a fleet of small vessels which cruised up and down the coast taking whales and *flensing* them, that is stripping off their blubber, alongside the Association's larger whaleships. About twice a month these larger vessels would land their cargoes of blubber at the dock in Bolinas where the oil would be tried out and refined. A similar operation was conducted at Trinidad far to the north of Black Point. There the California Sea Products Company sent its whalers south along the coast to overlap the Bolinas Company's hunting grounds.

In the meantime the heart of *The Sea Ranch* coast had passed from the hands of the pioneer settler Ernest Rufus. A claim was filed for the five leagues of Rufus's old German grant, from Plantation to Mendocino County, by Charles Meyer, William Benitz, Carlos T. Glein, a Mr. Hand and one of the pioneering Duncans of Sonoma County. This occurred on April 27, 1852. The grant was confirmed by the Board of Land Commissioners on December 23, 1852 and by the U.S. District Court on September 10, 1855. On January 30, 1860 it was re-confirmed, by mandate, by the U.S. Supreme Court. The patent was issued to Meyer et al. on July 30, 1872 and recorded at Santa Rosa. The grant was sometimes called the Rancho de [Fort] Ross, by mis-

take and also the Rancho de Hermann. It then totaled 17,580.01 acres. Carlos T. Glein and Henry Hagler ran it for a time and then it came, partly at least, into the possession of one of the most colorful characters of California's Redwood Coast. This was Captain William Bihler, a German like Sutter's other *Sea Ranch* comrades, Rufus, Glein, Hagler and Benitz. Many stories cluster around Bihler's name. He once offered to give or take, \$5,000 to or from William Hood of Los Guilucos Ranch to get that rancher to make a bid on a half-interest in Bihler's beautiful stallion, "*Old England's Glory*," which he had bought in Britain. The stallion was used for breeding, its colts bringing \$500 each. Hood thought for a moment then said, "I'll give or take \$10,000." Bihler refused his offer and paid Hood \$15,000 for the (unsold) half interest! Another time, Bihler paid Mariano G. Vallejo of Sonoma a certain sum of money for permission to round up and kill a small number of the Mexican ranchero's cattle. But he never stopped! Some Sonomans estimated that Bihler slaughtered 10,000 head, a fanciful figure. But it is true that he kept persuading himself that he always had a few more beeves coming and Vallejo finally returned Bihler's \$100 to him, to keep the German from bankrupting *him*.

Captain Bihler made his headquarters at Black Point, possibly on the very site of old Kowishal, 28 miles north of the Russian River and 12 miles south of the Gualala. Soon the little town of Bihler's Landing grew there and the outcropping of black rock came to be called Bihler's Point. The Captain came to California in 1848, around Cape Horn from Baltimore. By trade a butcher, he became a member of the West's landed gentry and eventually almost a cattle baron like his friend and associate of the San Joaquin Valley, Henry Miller. The German bought ranches in Marin, Sonoma and Napa Counties and operated five slaughter houses, including one at Hay Stock Landing on Petaluma Creek just below Petaluma. He drove cattle from his various ranches to feed lots there, fattened them and shipped beef by river steamer to San Francisco. In the City he had a wholesale meat company and a retail butcher shop. Bihler shipped a steamboat load of meat from each of his five north bay slaughter houses to San Francisco every day of the year except Sundays. From his German Ranch, Bihler delivered a ton of beef per week to the hungry lumbermen of the Gualala Mill alone, for 44 years! This chore was taken care of by two bachelors, Chris Stengel, Bihler's nephew, and Adam Knipp.

Bihler had a lot of trouble with illegal settlers on his rich coastal spread and in 1861 got the U.S. District Court to eject eighteen squatters from the German Rancho. He quieted the title but it was said along the coast that the vengeful squatters kept Bihler from visiting his "unsafe" ranch. He eventually sold it.

New pioneers came in. A. L. Fisk settled at Black Point, or Bihler's Landing in 1858. Con Shea became a neighbor of Knipp and Stengel. Shea was from Idaho and had been a blacksmith as a boy, in the Saratoga area. No more honest, trusting, and trustworthy man ever lived. His oral leases were as good as Government bonds. No tenant of his ever complained or suffered. He later moved to Santa Rosa where he owned several business blocks including the Elks Building. H. A. Richardson took over the segment of the coast right athwart Black Point Landing and the rest of the old Mexican grant, a thin wedge of land lying across the road from Black Point up to Annapolis, was owned by Mrs. Priscilla Cole.

Cattle drives continued right up through the 1880's and 1890's. One of the last of the coastal cowboys, or drovers, was Harvey Reynolds, who used to herd beef cattle down the coast from the pastures of the Mattole River to Point Arena and Gualala to feed the ravenous lumberjacks. He drove them along the beaches, bullying the animals into swimming the streams.

Bihler's Landing or Black Point Harbor became a busy little village, although in the mid-1880's it only mustered 61 permanent residents for the County Directory. It became a post office on July 10, 1863, with A. J. Fisk as its first postmaster. He came there with his brother John Colt Fisk to found Fisk Brothers, an enterprise handling merchandise and shipping, the smithy and the hotel. A. J. died in 1874 and his brother John Colt, took over as postmaster. Besides long holding this position, Fisk came to own practically the entire town—lock, stock and barrel. Or better, hotel, store and saloon. There were also chutes on the Point for shipping cordwood, lumber, tan bark, fence posts, and railroad ties. By 1867 H. B. Platt and H. A. M. Cook of San Francisco had built a sawmill there with tramways. This Platt Mill was capable of turning out 30,000 board feet of lumber a day. Two years later Rutherford and Hook started the Clipper Mill down the coast at Stewart's Point. Times were lively in the '70's. By the end of that decade the tiny port at Black Point was shipping annually 1,000 cords of tan bark worth \$10 a cord at the

chute, 500 cords of oak wood at \$6 a cord, and 8,000,000 feet of redwood lumber. Many of the ties for the transcontinental railroad, the Central Pacific portion, came from Sonoma and Mendocino Counties and it is more than likely that thousands were shipped from Black Point or Bihler's Landing. Others went to Honest Harry Meiggs' trans-Andean railroad in South America.

During the 1870's schooners like the *Lottie Collins* called regularly at the little "outside port," as these exposed anchorages were called. It was served by a full slide, a chute from the top of the bluff to the vessel. Later the apron chute was abandoned and replaced with a steel cable between ship and shore by which everything could be put ashore in a sling including breeches-buoyed passengers. In 1878 John C. Fisk built a shingle mill there with a capacity of 30,000 shingles a day.

According to *McKenney's Eight County Directory* of 1884-85, farmer James H. Throop had succeeded J. Carleton as Justice of the Peace on the future site of *The Sea Ranch* headquarters and George M. Purcell a teamster, doubled as town marshal. Earlier, around 1880 the little community's lawman had been D. Stump. There was a Methodist church there founded by L. W. Simmons on November 10, 1878. He was a circuit rider from Black Point, called Fisherman's Bay after the establishment of the post office, although the actual cove with that name was down the coast at Stewart's Point where Stewart's Creek hit the sea. He had a 20-mile long, 10-mile wide circuit to ride over some of the roughest country in California. There were 22 parishioners at Black Point or Fisherman's Bay and others at Miner Schoolhouse, Henry's Hotel, Ruoff's Schoolhouse and Fisk's Mill. He was succeeded by Rev. W. O. Haskins by 1884.

Herbert A. Richardson came to be one of the most important men in *The Sea Ranch* area. A large landholder, he also ran the general store in the 1880's, was the town blacksmith and served as both postmaster and Wells Fargo agent. Two men who were important to the limited social life of the little town—they must have passed on a lot of news and gossip—were Ernie Fisk the telegrapher and Richardson's bartender, Joseph P. Smith.

Most of the settlers at Black Point were farmers or stockmen like Knipp, Stengel, Shea, Mrs. Mary Loofbourow and J. C. Fisk. But there was also a shingle manufacturer, J. W. Keough, a lumber manufacturer, George Winslow, a harnessmaker, M. E. Black and a carpenter in the person of James Byrne. Most interesting, and better proof even than the palms still growing at Plantation

that this is a mild "banana belt" for its latitude, there were three wine growers at Black Point in the '80's! William H. Boyd, John C. Fisk and Charles Haupt were the enologists.

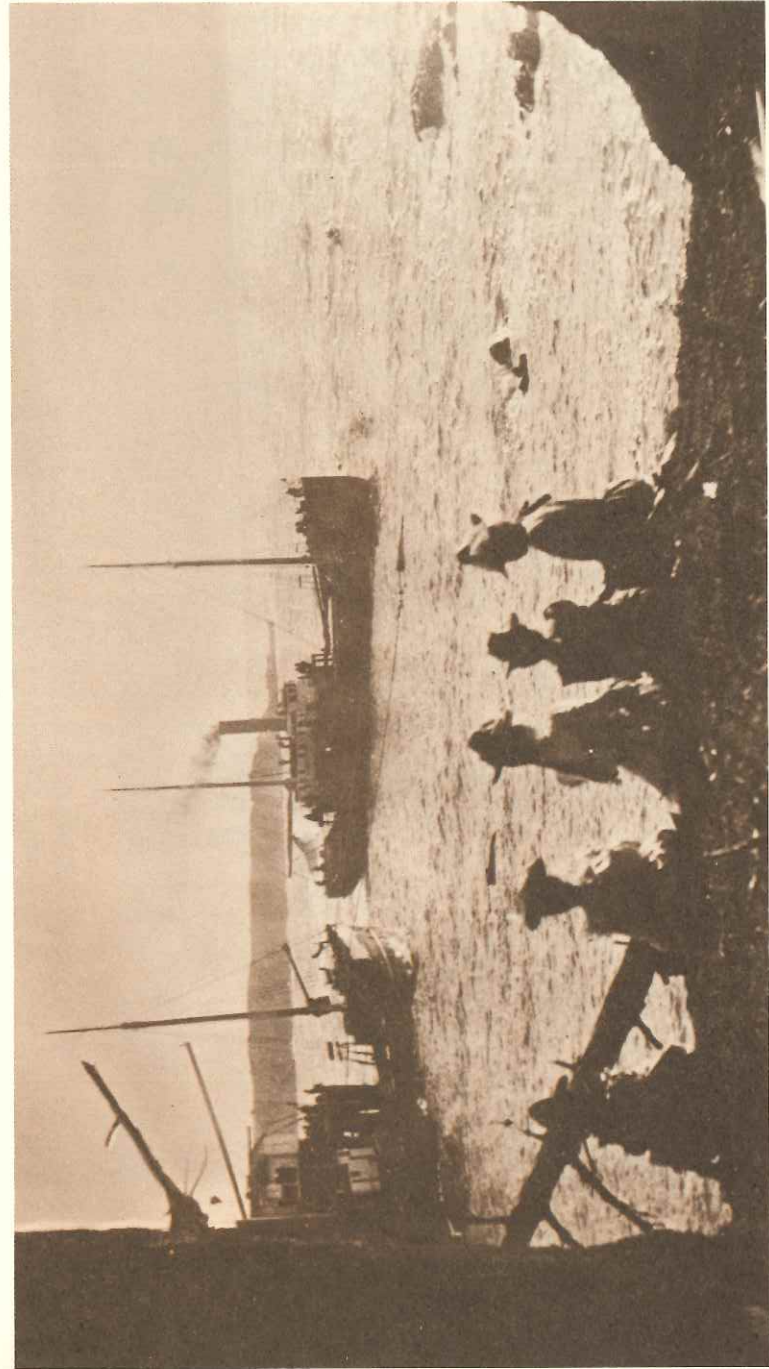
The "gay '90's" were years of transition first and then decline for Fisherman's Bay. James Byrne the carpenter was spreading himself thin; he was smithy, wagon maker, postmaster and Wells Fargo agent to boot. Richardson had gone down to Stewart's Point where his descendants still reside. A livery stable survived at Black Point; Boyd and Haupt were still growing wine grapes and M. Montagne had replaced Fisk as a vineyardist, but there were signs of decay. Although the shipping point which Bihler and D. L. B. Ross had set up adjacent to Fisherman's Bay was prospering, as all kinds of produce went down the chute (built in 1875) from the black loam of the coastal shelf, people began to drift away. Some followed Richardson south to Stewart's Point which did not secure a post office until 1880. Others went up to Gualala. For a time citizens listed themselves in the directories of both Fisherman's Bay and Stewart's Point, but by 1902 so many people had left for that village or the "metropoli" of the coast, Gualala and Point Arenas, as Point Arena was still called, that the Government closed the Fisherman's Bay post office.

However, times were *still* good. Haywood E. Harmon's big Gualala Mill, with a capacity of 30,000 board feet of lumber per day, produced about 5,000,000 feet per year. Gualala was a booming milltown drawing on 4,457 acres of redwoods in Mendocino County and 13,552 acres of the sequoias in Sonoma County directly behind *The Sea Ranch* area. The town was made lively by brawling lumberjacks ("woodsmen" they still called themselves), carpenters, sawyers, laborers and millwrights. The skilled elite of the labor force were the brawny ox-teamsters like J. R. Huff, L. Fairbanks, R. Nelson and J. Sanders, whose domination over *bull teams* and command of "cuss words" earned them the respect of the whole coast.

Attempts were made to improve roads serving *The Sea Ranch* coast. In July 1861 Sam Cassiday a Petaluma editor, writer and publisher, took a trip up to Fisherman's Bay and Fish Rock, now Anchor Bay, and described the ride: "Four miles beyond Salt Point we passed Fisk's Mill. This mill cuts about 8,000 feet of lumber daily. Its supply of timber is inexhaustible and we hope its proprietors may reap the rich reward which their enterprise merits. By noon, we had reached a distance of twenty miles

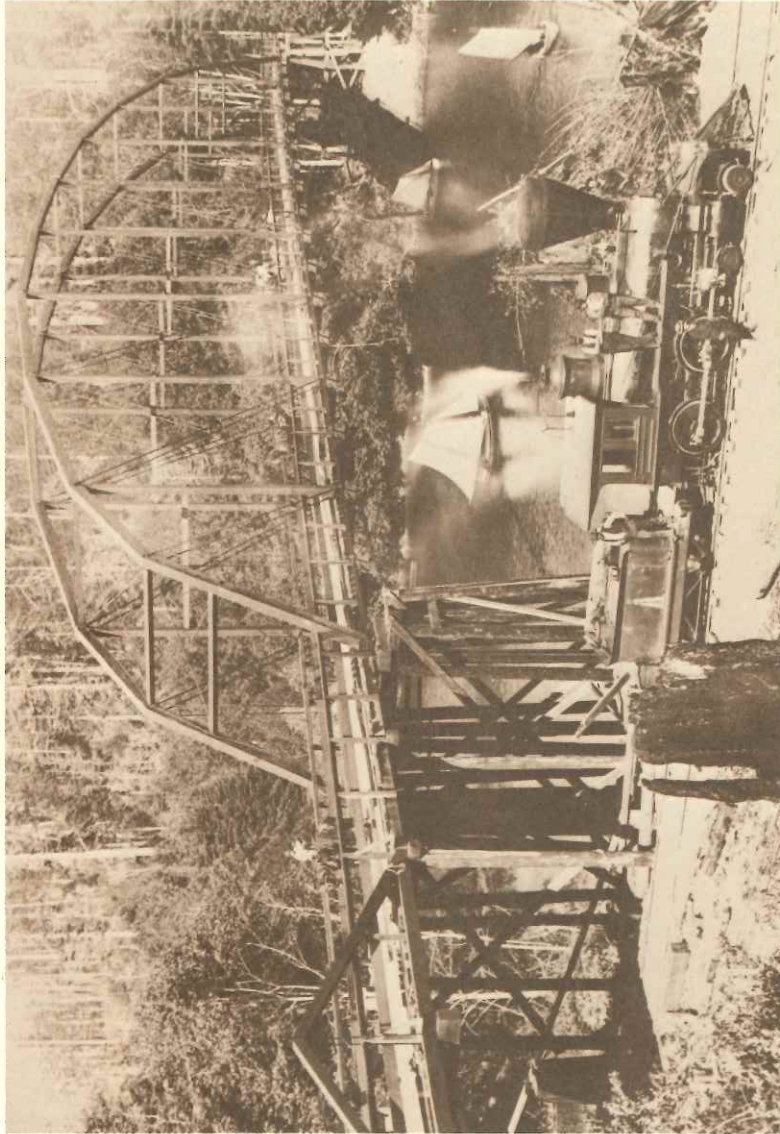
above Fort Ross and we stopped for refreshments at the ranch house of Bihler, the claimant of the German Grant. Here is a stretch of plain extending up and down the coast for ten miles, that is unsurpassed in beauty of location or fertility of soil anywhere between Point Reyes and Point Arenas. The plain varies from one-quarter to two miles in breadth and with just sufficient incline from the foothills to beach to afford a splendid view. The mountains bordering it are covered with a perfect wilderness of forest of incalculable value. Ten miles more had to be traversed up the coast before we turned our face homeward and Chris Stengel, of the ranch house, volunteered to act as our guide and companion. We were soon dashing pell mell over the plain up the coast, Chris, in the meantime, entertaining us by relating hunting adventures and pointing out spots where he had killed elk, bear, or other game of lesser consequence. Five miles brought us to the crossing of the Gualala River, where we entered Mendocino County. Here the mountains closed in upon the beach and timber stood so close upon the brink that if uprooted it would fall in the surf below. Up to this point, we had found the roads and trails reasonably good, but those five miles from the Gualala to Fish Rock were the concentrated essence of breakneck roads. Deep gorge after gorge lay athwart our way and in many places a false step would have precipitated both horse and rider down to certain destruction."

Shortly, attempts were made to improve the trail along the coast into a bona fide road. The pioneer here was not Cassidy but Lew W. Miller, operator of the stage line from Santa Rosa to Bloomfield and Valley Ford. He wanted to extend his daily mail service there to a regular weekly passenger, mail and express service up the coast to Point Arena. He took the entire Sonoma County Board of Supervisors on a tour of inspection from Duncanville in 1868 and convinced them that better means of communication to the Sonoma-Mendocino frontier were in order than the trails which had served the Pomos, Russians, Mexicans and pioneering Americans. By 1872 Lew Miller's stages were rattling their way up from Duncan's Mills to Point Arena via Plantation, Fisk's Mill, Stewart's Point, Fisherman's Bay or Black Point, Gualala and Fish Rock. It took the driver twelve and a half hours to make the run. In 1873 historian C. A. Menefee described the route as "a moderately good stage road running up the coast." Fares were low; it cost you only \$5.00 to ride from Duncan's Mills to Gualala. That is, unless you were held up by



San Francisco Maritime Museum

The doghole skippers of the "Scandinavian Navy" always put on a good show as they jockeyed their schooners around in tight quarters before the wide eyes of the Redwood Coast's schoolkids.



Roy Graves Collection

Even in the gay Nineties the Sonoma Coast was a vacation area. Pleasure boats sailed the lower reaches of the Gualala River, the northern boundary of The Sea Ranch, while other summer residents rode horseback or took a spin in the buggy across the (old) Gualala River Bridge. Meanwhile, the crew of the Number Two locomotive took a break with friends.

bandits. California's poetic "Black Bart", Charles Bolton, the most successful of all the West Coast's highwaymen, struck twice at these stagecoaches, robbing one on August 3, 1877 and another on July 22, 1880. Bolton's hiding place near Willits, California, came to be known as Black Bart's Rock. The citizenry of the Sonoma coast did not honor Bart in such fashion but they never forgot his daring raids on the stages north of Duncan's Mills. But normally, Miller's stages operated like clockwork, leaving Duncan's Mills on Wednesday and Saturdays at 6 a.m. and returning from Point Arena at 5 a.m. on Tuesdays and Fridays.

But what really made *The Sea Ranch* coast boom was not staging but railroading and sailing. Although the Redwood Empire mainline, the North Pacific Coast Railroad and the Northwestern Pacific Railroad from Sausalito never reached the Black Point-Gualala coast, coming no closer than Cazadero and Duncan's Mills, there were three railways in *The Sea Ranch* country. One was the little Clipper Mill horse railway at Stewart's Point. The second was the short, deadend line south along the coast from Del Mar Landing, marked now only by some rusted mooring rings in the rocks, whose roadbed is now a dirt road seaward of Ed Ohlson's ranch house. Its cars collected the timber brought down to the coastal plain from the redwood-choked cañons by bull teams, only a half of a mile from the track, and hauled it back to the mill. Ed Ohlson has one of the old locomotive bells at his ranch.

The major logging road of the area was the Gualala River Railway Company, a subsidiary of the Gualala Mill Company. From the mouth of the Gualala, first, and later from Bowen's or Bourne's Landing to the north, when the old Gualala Landing was abandoned at the mouth of the silted up river, a lumbering railroad was run up the main stream of the Gualala after operations became too farflung for ox teams to handle. The Gualala Valley was beautiful forest country. C. A. Menefee described the river in 1873. "It flows through a very heavily timbered country and is a favorite resort of hunters who love tramping over steep mountains and across deep gorges and having a rough time, generally."

The line laid up the south or main fork of the Gualala. It was neither narrow gauge nor the standard four foot eight and a half-inch "Roman chariot" gauge. It measured five feet, eight inches. It started as a horse-powered railway and a horse needed room

for his hooves between the tracks. In the 1890's the Gualala Mill Company switched from "horse power" to "iron-horse power," having four locomotives built to order to fit the wide track. By 1891 they were rumbling and snorting their way up the river past Pepperwood Creek, Bender's Camp on Rock Pile Creek, Buckeye Creek and to the end-of-track, called simply Logging Camp, near Stout's Place and Bear Camp on the Middle, or Wheatfield, Fork of the Gualala not far from today's Valley Crossing.

The four engines affected various styles of smokestacks—the diamond, the balloon and the cauliflower, to keep the sparks from setting the woods on fire and made a handsome little dry-land fleet. The trainmen, engineers like R. Heywood and firemen like the anonymous Chinese often photographed with old Number 2, became the elite guard of the Sonoma Coast labor force, displacing the bullwhackers.

Engine Number One was a little geared locomotive built by San Franciscans L. C. Marshutz and Thomas G. Cantrell, at their National Iron Works at Main and Howard Streets. Number Two was a Prescott, Scott & Company side-rod engine built by Peter Donahue's Union Iron Works in San Francisco. Locomotives Three and Four were more powerful Baldwins from Philadelphia. Since the logging trains did not operate at night, the headlights were often removed and trainmen would perch on the headlight platforms, sometimes when posing for pictures. One of the engineers even framed his wife's picture in the lens of the unused headlight of his engine.

The Gualala River Railway Company was organized, apparently from a prior horse railway, on Valentine's Day, February 14, 1891. Its Board of Directors consisted of four San Franciscans, S. H. Harmon, N. F. Dingley, F. Heywood, and H. A. Powell, and W. B. Heywood of Gualala. But W. B. Heywood really ran the show. It was his name which was prominently displayed on the tenders of the locomotives; it was he who was not only Vice President of the Company but also Chief Engineer and Superintendent of the logging line. The Railway's general office was located near San Francisco's Embarcadero at 31 Steuart Street. But W. B. ran its operating office at Gualala. Powell was the Company's General Counsel; Harmon its Treasurer; S. E. Hackley its Secretary.

Some 15,000 shares of common stock at \$1,000 a share were authorized and \$500,000 worth was issued in 1895. No passengers were transported over the dozen miles of single track except

working men. Besides the four fine locomotives, the line boasted thirty-two logging flatcars called dollies, some 1,400 feet of wooden bridges and a bizarre bicycle fitted up with an outrigger and a double-flanged wheel to make the trackwalker's life easier by getting him off his feet as he made his inspection tours of the roadbed, checking spikes, plates, ties and rails.

The demands of cities like San Francisco for lumber for the construction of homes and offices and warehouses and wharves, and the need of the railroads for ties, created both a redwood lumbering industry on the Sonoma-Mendocino coast and a fleet of ships to service it. So many of the skippers of these lumber schooners were Swedes or Norwegians that the fleet of sailing and steam schooners came to be called the "Scandinavian Navy." Some of its masters are almost legendary, like Captain John "Port Wine" Ellefsen and Captain Gudmund "Midnight" Olsen.

The tie whackers, axing out railroad ties and the Finn or Yankee loggers, handling heavy peavies as easily as if they were the brad-tipped goads of the bullwhackers, were no tougher than the seamen who worked the dogholes of *The Sea Ranch* coast. They fought wind and wave, fog, tide and surf, hidden reefs and isolated rocks, like jagged teeth. When they reached their "port" it was an exposed anchorage like Black Point where they would have to moor and anchor under a 75-foot cliff while a cantankerous, apron-gated, wooden chute gravity-fed them lumber or cordwood. If they were lucky, the "port" might boast a high line, instead, a wire cable on which cargo and passengers would be slung back and forth from ship to shore. The lumber schooner skippers used the inshore route, about five miles off the coast, cursing the big log rafts which they feared might put them out of business. These dreadful monsters, some 1,000 feet long, were towed by tugs down the coast from Fort Bragg or even as far away as Cathlamet on the Columbia River. Sometimes they broke up in a blow, littering the beaches with timber.

Although the coast south of Point Arena earned the reputation of being relatively fog-free, it was no picnic to call at Black Point, Stewart's or Del Mar Landing, the three ports, along with Gualala and Bowen's Landing, of *The Sea Ranch* coast some 80 miles from San Francisco. For even the breakers on that coast seem to be emulating the tallness of the timber of that "Paul Bunyan" country at times. But things became easier in 1880 for the dog hole droughers of the "Scandinavian Navy." The wind-

jamming schooners began to convert to steam. By 1888 Robert Dollar had built the first steam schooner, the *Newsboy*. Soon they were all up and down the coast, burning coal until about 1893 and oil after that date.

The *Sea Ranch* coast with its good visibility, was never the death-trap for ships that areas both north and south were. But not all vessels which called there did so deliberately like the *Lottie Collins*. Everyone on that littoral remembers well the grounding of the *Kenkoku Maru* at Black Point on April 28, 1951. It was a reminder of the once-common shipwrecks of the old days. Almost a hundred years earlier in May 1854, lonely Fort Ross was crowded with people of all kinds, for two parties of shipwreck victims reached the Fort at the same time. The Russian brig *Donna Maria*, Captain Sampson, laden with 17,000 feet of pilings for San Francisco from Sooke, on Vancouver Island, drifted onto the rocks 45 miles north of Ross. Although a heavy gale was blowing, all the men got ashore safely to commence a thirty hour walk down the Sonoma coast to the Bennett-Myres Ranch and then on to Bodega Bay where Captain Fitch of the schooner *Sovereign* took them to San Francisco. Mingling with the *Donna Maria* survivors were the crew and 70 to 80 passengers of the steamer *Arispe*, wrecked at Haven's Anchorage south of Point Arena. She was bound for Humboldt Bay, struck off the Point, and drifted southward down the coast. Her captain tried to run her into one of the sandy coves but missed and rammed her onto the rocks about 16 miles north of Fort Ross. An anonymous correspondent at the normally sleepy settlement wrote a letter to the San Francisco *Daily Alta California*, with all the details of the wrecks and an incidental "lively" bear hunt, then concluded, "You can imagine that the old Fort looks quite lively; the whole place is swarming with people that wear all sorts of costumes."

The great gales of the winters of 1865 and 1885 not only took down windmills, fences, outhouses and lumber chutes along the coast, they also drove ships ashore. In the '65 blow, Captain Lindell's *Helen*, one of nine schooners to be beached near Point Arena, was driven ashore on the same beach, *the very spot*, in fact, where she had been launched just one year to the day and hour, on November 17, 1864!

On the night of October 1, 1880, it was the *Three Sisters'* turn. She was loading at Gualala Landing when she dragged both her moorings and anchors and was forced up on the river's bar at



Roy Graves Collection

The husky Baldwin, Number Four, poses with a long string of loaded logging dollies in front of the big Gualala Mill 70 years ago.

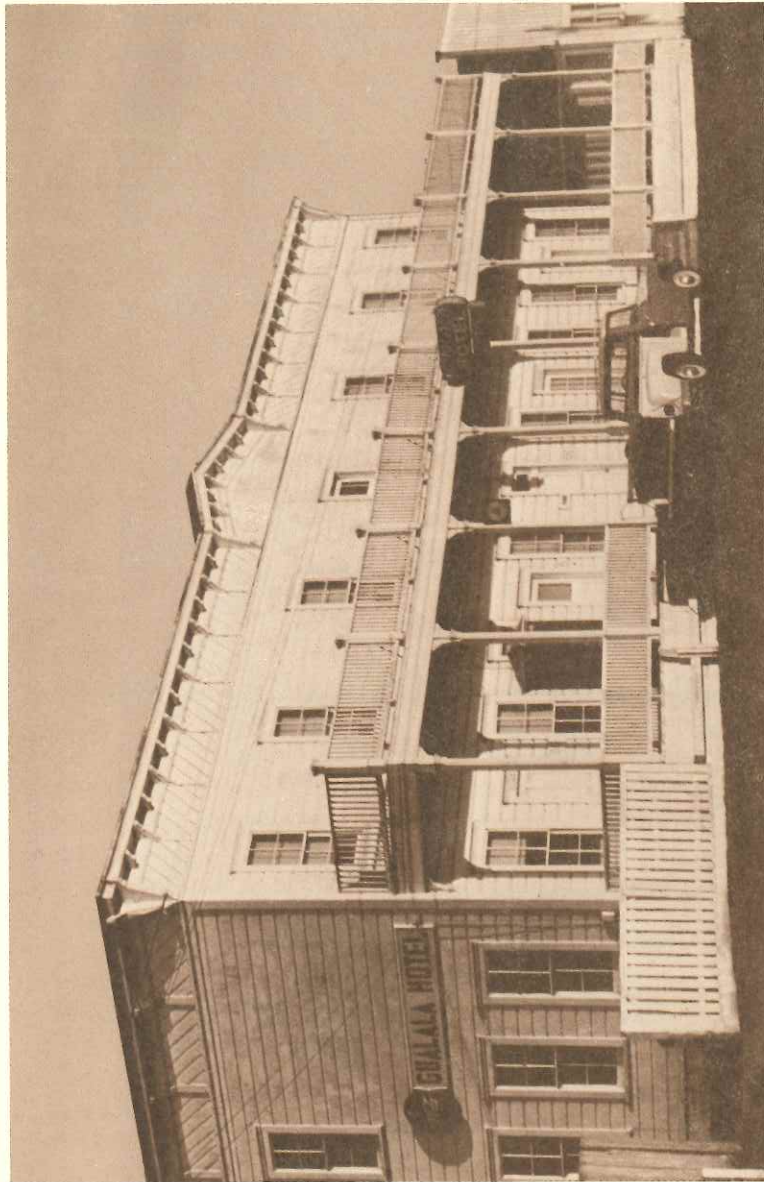
night. The sea broke heavily over her as she lay there but all hands, except the cooks, managed to hang onto the rigging until rescue came at dawn. The vessel was a total loss. The unlucky *Ellen Adelia*, nearly sunk in a collision with the steamer *Victoria* 40 miles northwest of Point Reyes in September 1880, finally had her luck run out on July 30, 1883. She left Bourne's Landing with a heavy deckload of lumber. At midnight it shifted. She broached to, in the heavy seas, and careened. Her crew fought desperately to save her by shifting cargo but she turned turtle. One sailor, Peter Smith, was drowned after she capsized but Captain Carlson and his four other crewmen clung to the rigging until the schooner *Lulu* rescued them just at the point of complete exhaustion. The tug *Sea King* towed the bottoms-up schooner to port.

The telegraph stations at Gualala and Black Point had to report many groundings and wrecks. The well-known schooner *John McCullough*, a longtime cordwood and tan bark carrier, parted her mooring lines at Fish Rock in March 1893 and her wreck there made the wires hum.

When the steamer *Crescent City* crashed into Fish Rock, that navigational menace at Anchor Bay which resembles, from a southerly viewpoint, Diamond Head's profile, the 20-man crew and dozen passengers were able to walk onto the "island" via a gangplank. These castaways of January 1903 had a fairly easy time of it; they carried mattresses ashore, soaked driftwood with coal oil and huddled around their cheery and warm signal fire in their night clothes to await rescue by the crew of the *Scotia*, lying at Bowen's.

By the 1890's, little gasoline launches and naphtha schooners were running along the dangerous Sonoma-Mendocino coast and despite the modern "vapour engines," some were lost. The launch *Mac Hyman*, for example, was wrecked off Stewart's Point in March 1907 and all because of a Model T! Her three-man crew was bringing 40 tons of freight from San Francisco to Point Arena, including one new Ford. The steel body of the auto affected the compass, she got off course and piled up.

On March 17, 1908, the steamer *Pomona*, with 84 passengers, ran on Monterey Reef off Fort Ross and exactly six years after the *Mac Hyman* was the victim of a Model T, the steam schooner *Albion*, Captain Victor Jacobson, and a crew of seven men, ran shore at Stewart's Point, March 1913, after the *Albion's* rudder broke, her propellor was lost, and she drifted helplessly.



Redwood Empire Association

In 1868, William B. Heywood and S. H. Harman purchased a half interest and began to step up logging of the belt of redwoods lying inland from Del Mar Landing and Black Point. The chief hostility of this coast was the Gualala Hotel, where some of California's great lumbermen have lived.

Marine disasters on the long coast stretching north from the Golden Gate are legion, of course, from the loss of the *Arispe* to the beaching of the *Kenkoku Maru*. Typical might be the wreck of the \$300,000 steamer *Norlina* near Gualala in August 1926. Loss of life in the long series of wrecks has been surprisingly small thanks to the courage of sailors, Coast Guardsmen and inhabitants of the coast, like medal-winning life-savers Lazeras Posanivich and Sam Miller, the latter a California Indian. A good example of this would be the wreck of the steam schooner *Klamath* on the night of February 4, 1921. Captain Thomas Jamieson, a veteran on the bridge, was taking her to Portland in ballast, with a complement of 34 officers and men and 19 passengers.

The lookout cried "breakers ahead!" But it was too late. The ship struck a rock just offshore of the ghost town of Del Mar Landing, now Ed Ohlson's Ranch. Skipper and mate rushed to the bridge, orders were shouted for full speed astern but the steam schooner was doomed. She just ran her stern onto another hidden rock, wrecking her tailshaft and propellor. Jamieson had his wireless operator send an SOS and all aboard went on deck to abandon ship. The *Curacao* and the *Everett*, the *Klamath's* sister-ship, heard her call for help but could only stand offshore in deeper water, unable to be of any assistance. But one of Jamieson's brave seamen, Charles Svenson, volunteered to swim a line ashore. He made it safely and a breeches buoy was rigged up. Inhabitants of the Del Mar Landing area helped and summoned the Coast Guard from Point Arena. The problem of how to get baby Phil Buckley ashore was solved when a seaman tied a garbage can to his back, placed the baby in it, and rode ashore with his "pappoose" in the breeches buoy. The sturdy wooden vessel had broken her back and was a total loss. But thanks to the calibre of the men of the Redwood Coast Fleet, only Snookums, the ship's cat, lost his life.

Tantalizing are the tales of vessels which disappeared off the Sonoma Coast. The *Galatea* worked its way up the coast in July 1882 into oblivion and mystery. According to the *Mendocino Beacon* of February 6, 1886, the schooner *Esther Cobos* also vanished. Captain Henry Crangle had brought her to the landing at Signal Port, then went ashore to get provisions at Fish Rock (Anchor Bay). The Pacific belied its name as it often does, grew rough and persuaded the mate to cut the lines and flee to sea with her. There she was swallowed up, causing Captain Crangle

to swallow the anchor, that is, abandon the sea, to marry and settle down at Fish Rock. But *did* the *Esther Cobos* disappear without a trace? No, she popped up again, for on November 28, 1889, she ran aground on the sandy beach at Fish Rock. Captain Crangle was still in command. Whether she got off or not the newspapers did not say. Perhaps Sonoma old-timers know.

During most of the 20th Century, *The Sea Ranch* coast has been a quiet place, the still of the countryside broken more by the baaing of sheep than by the scream of a ship's whistle signalling its death throes on the rocks. Lumbering and sheep raising continued; the Del Mar Ranch became the longest, if not the largest, in Sonoma County and became the property of the Ohlsons. Before World War I, W. P. Frick planted the beautiful "hedges," as they are called locally, of Monterey cypress. These hedgerows are tall now, where once they were cropped like Victoria, B.C., shrubs by two men who worked the year around at nothing else. One guided a two-wheeled wagon on which a tall ladder was fixed, while the other man teetered at the top, shearing off unwanted foliage. The cypresses were brought from San Francisco up Petaluma Creek on the steamboat *Gold* and then transported to the Sonoma Coast by wagon. Perhaps Frick was responsible for the covering of Scottish pines, or bullpines, which fringe the coast and before the second growth took over, screened somewhat the old scars of logging, bleached debris and the tall sticks of gray or almost bone-white dead timber mixed in with the live sequoias.

Prohibition brought back the wild and woolly days to *The Sea Ranch* country. Rum runners and the pursuing Coast Guard offshore and bootleggers on land kept things humming. Lumber schooners were searched and crewmen jailed when caches of liquor were found aboard ship. As many as seventeen barrels of Canadian whiskey might make its way to San Francisco under a wagon-load of cordwood, or fruit and even Christmas trees! On such headlands jutting toward Japan as Black Point and Del Mar Point, bootleggers buried railroad ties for "deadmen" to anchor slings to vessels offshore, just like the high lines of the old lumber port days. Barrels of Canada's finest—it was fondly hoped by the thirsty of California—sometimes came ashore in the cove between the two Del Mar ranches. Sometimes it was cases of bottled whiskey. Apple boxes with false bottoms carried the bottled or rebottled spirits to Sausalito, via the Northwestern Pacific Railroad, and thence to San Francisco by ferryboat.

Sometimes a box of apples would make the trip so many times, back and forth, that the fruit would grow shriveled with age. No one seemed to question why boxes of apples were being shipped from San Francisco to the apple country of Sonoma County.

But when repeal made spirits legal again, the coast from the Gualala south to Stewart's Point lapsed back into bucolic sleepiness, a slumber from which it is only now being re-awakened by *The Sea Ranch* development and a new kind of pioneering on the historic Sonoma coast.