

## OUR HISTORY

In 1925, the Union of Russian Cossacks at Shanghai was established in Shanghai, China by the first generation of the Cossacks who settled in Shanghai as they retreated from the Bolsheviks. In 1926, some gained entry to the United States, settling in San Francisco. At the end of World War II, more of these Cossacks who did not have family members born in China were allowed to immigrate to the United States arriving there as early as 1946. Cossacks with family members born in China were not allowed to enter the United States. The United States decided that there were too many Chinese in the United States already and no one born in China was allowed entry.

When the Chinese Communists approached Shanghai in 1948, the Cossacks and other Russians still remaining in Shanghai had to get out of China. They looked for refuge everywhere but the only country that would allow them entry was the Philippines. In January and February of 1949 between 5,000 and 6,000 "refugees" were transported by ship to a seven square mile island called Tubabao located off the south-eastern tip of Samar Island. There they cleared the jungle and built a tent camp. From Tubabao about 1,000 refugees, including the Shanghai Cossacks, dispersed to any country that would accept them; Australia, Argentina, Chile, Dominican Republic, and France. The rest had no place to go.

In the United States, there were Russians, including Cossacks, living in San Francisco since Fort Ross was established in 1812. The Russians were a part of the American community and the Cossacks were not a coherent group. This changed in 1923 when Cossacks who were part of Admiral Stark's flotilla arrived in San Francisco from Manila, seeking asylum from the Bolshevik revolution. They were allowed to stay, their numbers later augmented by the arrival of the 1926 Shanghai Cossacks. In 1926, this enlarged old and new Cossack community incorporated The All-Russian Cossacks Unit. With the return of peace and calm, its membership became relatively inactive. World War II changed things.

As more Shanghai Cossacks came to United States after 1946, many joined The All-Russian Cossacks Unit and reinvigorated it. The specific purpose became raising funds and generating public support to get Cossacks from the Philippines and from the rest of the world to San Francisco. To facilitate this purpose, in December 1949, the "All

Cossacks' Union of San Francisco" was incorporated as a California nonprofit corporation. The activities of The All-Russian Cossacks Unit ceased and its membership merged into the new corporation.

The 5,000 "Shanghai refugees" remained on Tubabao, Philippines, until through the intercession of St. John of San Francisco, California, United States Senator William Knowland came to Tubabao in 1950 and realized that the Russian refugees were not Chinese. He authored a bill that allowed the Russian refugees to enter the United States. The refugees were allowed entry to the United States if they had a sponsor who would support them until they became self-sufficient. The Cossacks in San Francisco turned their efforts to get sponsors for the Tubabao Cossacks.

By the time Cossacks from Tubabao started arriving in San Francisco (first ship arrived on November 30, 1950) the All Cossacks' Union of San Francisco had already raised enough funds to collect the down payment for the Cossacks' House, a large Edwardian mansion at 900 Ashbury Street. From this headquarters, the All Cossacks Union of San Francisco sponsored hundreds of Cossacks to America. That work complete, the All Cossacks Union of San Francisco is now part of the family of Cossack support organizations existing throughout the world.

The Cossack Monument at the Serbian Cemetery in Colma, California was erected in 2003 by our hard working Cossacks and generous donors as a Memorial to all those who suffered. For years, Cossacks have preserved their cultural and historical heritage as well as given help, financially, emotionally & spiritually, to those in need.