

# Little Santorini on the River Don

Konstantinos Thodis, historical researcher

In the bibliography and the local papers that were dedicated to Constantinovka, a town which is found about 70 km north of Donetsk in the Ukraine, the surname Nomikosov was unknown. The family settled in Russia or more accurately in Taganrog at the beginning of the 19th century. The person who first decided to settle and invest in the area of 'End of the Curve' was definitely Panteleimon Nomikosov. The family came from the southernmost Cycladic Island in the Aegean: Santorini\*. There is a witness account from the area that has been saved which states that he was the only landowner in 1812, as was the case with many others of the nobility of that era, who was a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Cossacks stationed in the area of the River Don. It is logical to assume that the land in the valley of the River Don, which was named 'End of the Curve' – Кривой Топец -, was given to him due to his participation in the 1812 war. In the same year, Nomikosov bought 20 serf families in the Kursk Province and settled them in the area and called it the 'Santourinovka Settlement' - Little Santorini in Greek.

Panteleimon Nomikosov had three sons : Nikolai, born in 1813; Dmitri, born in 1814; Constantine, born in 1815. Each child inherited a part of the land from their father and from which came the settlements Nikolayievka, Dmitrievka and Constantinovka. It has been proven that 1815 is the year of birth of his youngest son and that the town of Constantinovka which exists today derives from him. After graduating from the 'Pension of Nobles' in St. Petersburg, Constantine Nomikosov returned to the land that his father had bequeathed him and he became a landowner. He employed serfs who farmed the land until 1861 at which time serfdom was abolished and industrialization began in the central part of Don. During the time of Constantine and up until the present day, the town has had the name of its founder and today celebrates the 2nd century of its foundation. The peasants cultivated the land with oxen and ploughs and when the harvests were good they lived well. In 1859 the population was 29 in Constantinovka and 280 in Santourinovka.

At the end of the 1860s, Constantine Nomikosov sold a strip of land to facilitate the building of the Kursk - Charkov - Azov railway. He wanted the railway to pass by his land and the local station to have his name. The train service of the railway line with Constantinovka as a station started in 1870. The industrialization of the area began in the same year. In the years that followed the name Constantinovka was connected with investments by Belgian businessmen. There is a contract which is dated 01-08-1895 and states: Dmitri Constantinovich Nomikosov - grandson of the founder of Santourinovka and son of the founder of Constantinovka has received a guarantee of 6,756.75 gold rubles from the Belgian investors, mortgaging 200 hectares of land in the valley of the river and along the railway line.

Only one photograph remains of Constantinovka which was taken before the Leninist Bolshevik Revolution and which was taken by the photographic studio of Chesnokov in Constantinovka. Petros Nomikosov, cousin of Dmitri Nomikosov

who established trade relations with the Belgian investors, is pictured in the centre. Petros lived in Constantinovka until the October Revolution. (Photo. 1)



The production of bottles in the Belgian glassworks began in Constantinovka in 1897. In 1903 the Leninist paper 'The Spark' - Искра - wrote, 'Constantinovka, railway junction of the Ekaterinoslav station, is found 40-50 miles south of Slavyansk'. In the 1890s many factories had already been built for the following: metal sheeting, glass, mirrors, bottles and chemicals along with living quarters for the workers. In 1915 there were 2 hospitals, a school, a private school for secondary education, technical school, a college of education, a medical school and a technical school for ceramics and farming. By 1923 Constantinovka had become the centre of education for the wider area, including all the villages and suburbs. In 1926, Constantinovka passed from being a rural settlement and in 1932 it became a town in its own right and with all the powers and authority which that right included. There was construction of urban properties and a tram line from the station to the town centre. The Russian Dramatic Theatre A. S. Pushkin opened its doors in 1936. Today the city has a population of 107.7 thousand and an area of 69 sq. km. An interesting fact is that in 1930 the glassworks of Constantinovka produced ruby stars for the Kremlin in Moscow, sarcophagi for Lenin's Mausoleum and crystal fountains for the world exhibitions in New York.

The National Museum of Constantinovka. (Photo. 2)



Pear-shaped and cone bottle from the Constantinovka glassworks. To the right a ruby glass.(Photo. 3,4,5)



The appearance of the cinema in Taganrog at the end of the 19th century was thought to be the golden era and many sought to profit from it. This is how it happened:

On the corner of Petrovskaya Street, by-street Uspenskaya, (today's Lenina 62) there was a food factory which steam-produced pasta.

The old Petrovskaya Street where the food factory and later the cinema 'Illusion' stood. (Property of the Nomikosov family.) (Photo. 6)



The building had one storey and a red-tiled roof. There were poplar trees planted all around. At that time the building was owned by Anton Dmitrievich Nomikosov, a Greek citizen from Santorini. (In Greek: Antonios Nomikos of Dimitrios) After the death of the owner in 1894 the management passed down through the many sons and daughters of Anton Dmitrievich. In November 1907 the heirs opened a cinema called 'Illusion' - alluding to English and French taste. A short while after and more accurately on 24th January 1908, during a film being shown that day, a fire broke out due to a malfunction in the projector, part of which was in the auditorium. Panic broke out among the audience and many were punched and kicked whilst trying to get out. The building was severely damaged but not totally destroyed. On 11th April 1912 a second fire broke out which completely destroyed within a few minutes, due to the strong easterly winds blowing at that time, the cinema, 2 drying machines, offices and storage facilities belonging to the Nomikosov heirs, the neighbouring restaurant 'North' — Север - belonging to the Greek A. Rottas, the bakery of Orchimenko and part of the roof of the house belonging to the Greek family Baxevanidi.

\*Many of the Aegean islands appeared due to volcanic activity. One of those islands is found in the Cycladic Archipelagos and is called Thira. Thira, along with the islands of Thirasia, Old and New Kameni and Aspronisi, belongs to a group of islands which appear in the shape of a circle called Santorini. In ancient times the island was called 'Circle' due to its shape although the volcano at that time had not yet begun its catastrophic activity. In 1600 BC, the Minoan era, there was a volcanic eruption.

The village of Oia. (Photo. 7)



Thira is found where four geological seismic plates meet. For thousands of years up until the eruption it was one whole island. Following the eruption, the island was shattered into smaller parts. In 1967 on Akrotiri, the archaeologist Spiridon Marinatos discovered a lost Minoan town under a layer of volcanic ash. The volcano is found 130 km. north of Crete. The volcanic ash cloud reached Crete in less than half an hour. The earthquake began; the rain came. The Minoan palace was engulfed in flames. The volcanic eruption had caused the earthquake which in turn caused a tidal wave (tsunami). Santorini exploded like a steam boiler. The eruption also caused oscillations in the Earth's surface and subsidence in local areas. But worse than all this was the creation of a new tidal wave which was larger and stronger than the first. The gigantic wave, whose height in all probability reached 100 – 200 metres, fell on the northern coast of Crete. The tsunami completely destroyed the Minoan fleet, the structures on the island and a large proportion of the population on Crete and the Cyclades. It is certain that the Cretan-Minoan civilization had undergone such destruction that it could not recover. However, archaeological excavations on Crete show that a Minoan civilization did exist after the eruption, a fact that is proven by the many buildings that were discovered above the layer of volcanic ash.

The famous French undersea explorer, Jacques Cousteau, came very close to proving that there were ruins of a Minoan civilization at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea which were the remains of the lost island of Atlantis. These also included Santorini's group of islands. If Atlantis really had been using some unknown source of energy, for example geothermic energy, it is easy to imagine that the rash use of these sources could have led to the volcanic eruption. On one of these islands, Thira, the earliest civilization appeared circa 3000 BC and was Pre-Hellenic. During the archaeological excavations on Thira, in the ancient

town of Akrotiri, two 2-3 storey buildings which were decorated with murals very similar to the murals in one of the Minoan palaces on Crete were found under a thick layer of volcanic ash.

Huge liners and private yachts moor in the harbour of Santorini and many aeroplanes land there every day. Santorini is a fashionable island like Ibiza and Majorca. The villas belonging to stars of the cinema and famous celebrities have been built there. Thousands of tourists visit the village of Oia every year in order to enjoy the stunning sunset. It is the most romantic island in the world. Many young couples have their honeymoon here.

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