

## Del Monte Forest Property Owners

a non-profit  
California Corporation

3101 Forest Lake Road  
Pebble Beach, CA 93953  
831.373.1618 phone  
831.373.1619 fax

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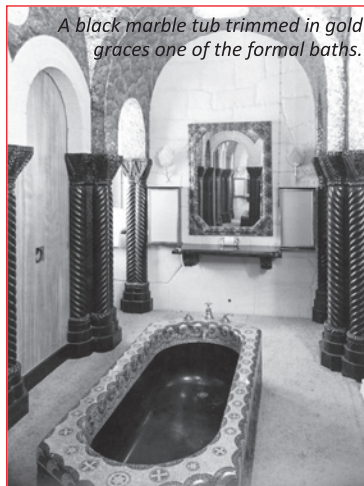
office@dmfpo.org  
www.dmfpo.org

# FOREST NEWS

## The Crocker-Irwin Mansion

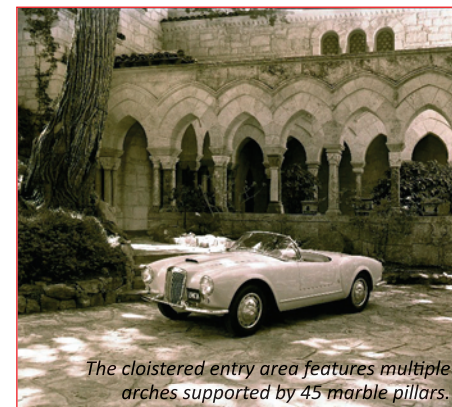


Helene Irwin-Crocker-Fagan built her ten thousand square foot castle on the rocks above the Pacific near Pescadero Point.



A black marble tub trimmed in gold graces one of the formal baths.

The sixth in a series of articles on the history of Del Monte Forest by Neal Hotelling



The cloistered entry area features multiple arches supported by 45 marble pillars.

Article photos courtesy of Julian P. Graham photographs / Pebble Beach Company Lagorio Archives

One of the most storied homes in Pebble Beach hides behind walls and hedges

near Pescadero Point. Tour buses that can see over the fence point it out as the site of multiple movies, including *My Favorite Brunette* (1947) starring Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour and *Escape to Witch Mountain* (1975) with Eddie Albert rescuing two alien children from Ray Milland, master of the mansion.

Many people refer to it as the "Crocker Mansion," yet no Crocker ever called it home. Charles Templeton Crocker (1884-1948) is the Crocker associated with this property. His father was Charles Frederick Crocker (1854-1897), the railroad Baron's eldest son. Both Charles Frederick and his wife Jennie (1858-1887) died young leaving Templeton and his sisters as trustee children who became multi-millionaires in their own right as soon as they came of age. In 1905, while a student at Yale and a classmate of S.F.B. Morse, Templeton's personal net worth at the time was estimated at five-million dollars—real money in those days.

San Francisco society pages began to go wild in 1910, when rumors of Templeton dating Helene Irwin started to emerge. Helene was born in Hawaii in 1887, and her father, William G. Irwin (1843-1914) made a large fortune in sugar. He owned the entire island of Lanai as

well as commercial property in Honolulu and was part owner of the Second Bank of Hawaii with his sugar partner, Claus Spreckels, a German immigrant based in California. In 1909, Irwin sold his sugar interests and moved his wife and daughter to San Francisco so that Helene might meet a proper husband. She did, and when she married Templeton on February 2, 1911, her father gave her stocks and bonds valued at one million dollars and her mother gave her a new limousine. After a honeymoon traveling the country in a private railcar, the wealthy couple settled in Hillsborough, California, where Templeton had spent his youth.

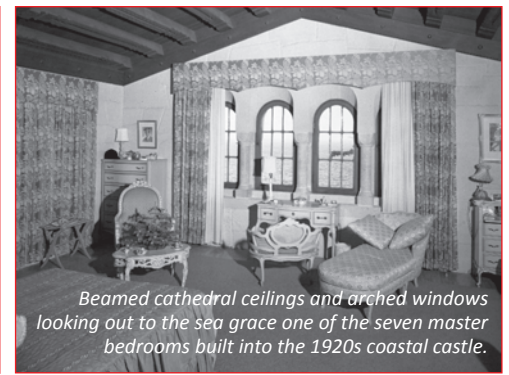
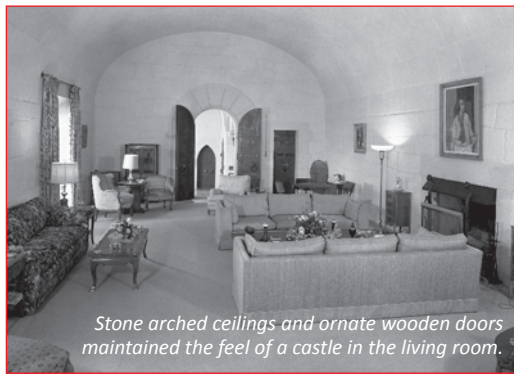
By the time S.F.B. Morse formed Del Monte Properties Company and turned 17-Mile Drive into the toniest address in California, both of Helene's parents had died and she had inherited another \$13 million. On September 15, 1923, Helene bought the 3-acre coastal lot adjacent to Pescadero Point for \$20,000 and engaged Santa Barbara architect George Washington Smith to design her castle. In mid-June 1926 she

and Templeton held a party at the site to lay the cornerstone. Among those in attendance was Templeton's cousin, W.W. Crocker (son of William H. Crocker) who decided to buy "Casa Amici," which had been built earlier by mining engineer John Vincent Rittenhouse and his wife Clara on the lot next door.



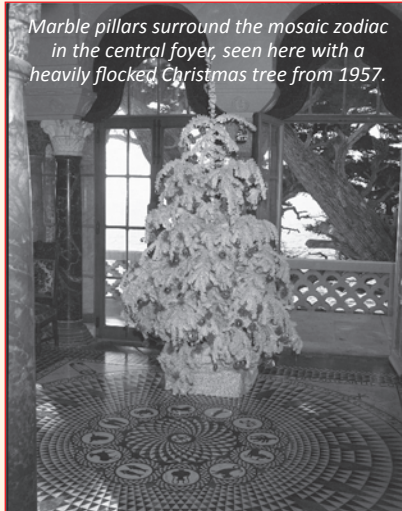
Costumed revelers try out an ornate marble tub during a 1960 house party.

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*The Crocker-Irwin Mansion - continued from page 1*

George Washington Smith (1876-1930), originally from Pennsylvania, built a reputation as a painter and studied in Europe. He came to California to see his art on display at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exhibition in San Francisco and decided to stay on the West Coast. He settled in Montecito, where he designed and built his own home. The acclaim for his architecture outpaced that of his paintings, and he changed his focus. He designed more than 80 homes in Santa Barbara County, most of which were built and had earlier designed "Villa Eden" for Arthur Rose Vincent further north of the Crocker site. He also designed the Cypress Point Clubhouse, which was built after he died on March 16, 1930. Smith was noted for blending history with modern design, and outdid himself in creating what is believed to be the only Byzantine-style structure in America for Mrs. Crocker.



The two-foot thick exterior walls were formed of reinforced concrete faced with eight-inch thick Doria stone brought from Mount Vesuvius; the cloistered entry area included 45 marble pillars imported from 32 quarries in 16 different countries. The approximately 10,000 square-feet of interior space was equally impressive with seven master bedrooms, each with its own bath. A 16th-century mantle, featuring the 12 Apostles in carved stone, adorned the fireplace in the formal dining room, and the floor in the entry was a marble mosaic Zodiac chart in a Byzantine design. The most magnificent of bathrooms featured a tub, ornately carved from a slab of black marble with trim of real gold; the vaulted mosaic ceilings shimmered with mother-of-pearl from native abalone shells.

However, as the 30 craftsmen labored on the fine details of the palatial home, all was not right with the Crockers at home in Hillsborough. Templeton busied himself with writing and producing plays for the Bohemian Club, and funding expeditions and traveling with the California Academy of Sciences aboard his personal yacht. Helene was left at home. The childless couple divorced in 1928, with Helene retaining the palace still under construction at Pebble Beach. She went East for a few months and there married Paul I. Fagan (1893-1960) in New York on March 15, 1929. He was a successful exporter and importer, and after a honeymoon in Europe, they bought the W.C. Van Antwerp home in Hillsborough and soon finished her Pebble Beach getaway. The final cost of the Pebble Beach castle was reported to be \$2.1 million.

The Fagans remained together until his death in 1960, spending time between their homes at Hillsborough, Pebble Beach and Hawaii; even developing a 10,000-acre cattle ranch and, in 1946, a luxury resort on Maui. Their Pebble Beach estate was on the market in 1946, when filming of *My Favorite Brunette* took place. A few months later it was bought by George and Marcia Hart for just \$160,000. The Hart's made it their home from 1947-1955, and then sold it to Noel Poux, a Penn State engineer whose interest in the peninsula was piqued when his son was stationed at Fort Ord. Poux made his first fortune with the invention and improvement of zippers, and later formed a plastic pipe company in 1942. He planned a west coast branch of his plastics company in Seaside. He converted two bedrooms of the castle as his personal design studio



and otherwise used the home as a place to entertain business associates. His primary residence and business remained in Pennsylvania.

While there are references that early Los Angeles Angels hurler turned stock broker Clare V. Goodwin and his wife Kathryn called the castle home in the late 1950s, Poux still owned the home at the time. In 1962, Harold Chittenden bought the showpiece and attempted to open it for tours. Morse immediately shut down that operation as a violation of deed restrictions. The house was put back on the market for \$200,000 and sold in 1964 for \$165,000.

From 1964-1980, the castle was owned by George Stoll (1905-1985), a jazz violinist who became a music director, first with Bing Crosby on radio, and later with MGM, working on everything from Judy Garland's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) to Elvis Presley's *Viva Las Vegas* (1964) and *Spinout* (1966). Stoll won the Best Musical Score Oscar® for *Anchors Away* (1945). For Stoll and his wife Merien (known to all as "Dallas") this was their primary residence in retirement, surrounded by movie memorabilia and

receiving visits from many Hollywood stars through the years, including Elvis and Priscilla Presley in 1967, while visiting Priscilla's parents at Fort Ord. The Hollywood pair no doubt enjoyed opening their home to the Disney Studio for *Escape to Witch Mountain*, but in 1980 they sold the estate for \$4 million dollars and moved to a moderately smaller and easier to maintain home at Pebble Beach where George died in 1985 and Dallas lived until her death in 2001.

Since 1980, the castle at Pescadero Point has returned to its role as a getaway for its wealthy owners, but has only changed hands twice. Mahdi Investment Company bought the property from the Stolls and held it for nearly two decades. In 1998 they put it on the market for \$25 million, eventually selling it for \$13.25 million in August 1998 to the Pescadero Point Trust of Southern California; the most expensive home ever sold (at that time) in Monterey County. The current ownership prefers to remain private, but treasures one of the most unique architectural examples in the world – here in Del Monte Forest.