



David Jacks

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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Gore and his two sons

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

President's Message
page 2

DMFPO Semiannual Meeting
Sunday, November 14, 2-4 pm
page 3

Water News
page 3

Global Positioning
Mapping with CALFIRE
page 4

Life in a Cozy Hole
page 5

Citations by Location
page 5

Afghan Endgames
Success Status Seminar
page 6

office@dmfpo.org
www.dmfpo.org

The Question of Ownership

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

The recorded ownership trail of the 4,426.46 acre El Pescadero Rancho that comprises most of Del Monte Forest begins with Fabian Baretto, who received it as a Mexican land grant in 1836. He built a small ranch there and moved in with his wife Maria. Fabian died in 1841. Maria married Juan Madriaga in 1844 and moved into Monterey. Two years later, she sold the Rancho for \$500 to Juan Romie, a recent immigrant from Germany, by way of Mexico. Four years later, Romie died in the gold fields of Placer County, and his widow, Maria, sold the Rancho in 1853 for \$4,400 to John Christopher Gore of Roxbury, Massachusetts.

A widower, Gore moved to the Rancho with his two sons, John (12) and Arthur (10), and educated them himself. In 1860, Gore retained an agent in the east, Frederick Z. Seymour, to sell the Rancho or trade it for eastern property. Seymour arranged a swap with Edward Tompkins in May for a 45-acre ranch in Binghamton, NY. In late 1860, the Gores returned east so the boys could attend college. Trouble soon followed.

Tompkins was an attorney and came west, enjoying his new Rancho but settling in Oakland where he established his new law practice. While at the Rancho, he met Judge Fletcher Haight of Carmel Valley, and married his daughter, Sarah, in 1861. Haight was well connected, and in 1867 his son Henry became Governor of California. In 1869, Tompkins became the State Senator from Alameda. His hold on the Rancho, however, was short lived.

Gore ultimately objected to the trade, and argued that his agent, Seymour, lacked

authority to complete the transfer without Gore's signature. Gore challenged both Seymour and Tompkins. Not wanting to deal with the controversy, Tompkins sold the Rancho to David Jacks in 1862 for \$10,000. With the dispute still unresolved, Gore purported to give title to the Rancho to his son, John, before dying in 1867. The younger Gore then returned to California and began a prolonged legal battle against Jacks.

With the issue of title still in controversy, Jacks sold the Rancho in 1880 for about \$22,000 to Pacific Improvement Company, which was soon to open Hotel Del Monte in Monterey. The legal battle continued. The last of Gore's legal challenges was filed in U.S. District Court in San Francisco in 1904 and included the United States among the defendants. Gore again lost, and this time he appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. His suit was dismissed on December 4, 1905, finally giving clear title to Pacific Improvement Company, which sold it to Del Monte Properties Company in 1919.

