

Who was Macomber of Macomber Estates? - by Neal Hotelling

Abraham Kingsley Macomber, King to his friends, was born in Morristown, New Jersey in 1875. His family moved to Iowa and then on to Pasadena, California in 1883. As a young man he met Frederick Russell Burnham (later, founder of the Boy Scouts) and traveled with him to Africa in 1894 to map the area that would become known as Rhodesia. While the trip was successful they were caught up in native disputes and held under siege for two months before being rescued by the British Army. He left Africa for London, and after a time there returned to the United States. In New York City he married Myrtle Harkness in 1899 and returned with her to Pasadena. Myrtle's grandfather Stephen Harkness, had been an early investor in Standard Oil, and his wealth passed to Myrtle's father Lamon, who in addition to having banking interests in New York had a ranch in Kentucky where he bred horses.

Macomber followed his father-in-law's interests. In 1902 he founded the Los Angeles Trust Company which he sold and then in 1906 bought a large ranch in San Benito County.

The 8,917.52-acre Rancho Cienega de los Pacines had been granted to Angel Maria Castro, then purchased in 1867 by Irish immigrant Alexander Grogan who built it into a successful dairy operation. After he died in 1886, his sister tried to continue it, and it went through a couple of ownership



1920 Passport photo of
A. Kingsley Macomber,
he was 6'0" tall.

changes before Macomber and partner George Sykes purchased it and divided it. Macomber kept the developed portion, and in addition to raising cattle began breeding thoroughbred horses. Myrtle, who had spent several years working with her father's horses in Kentucky, took an active role in their new enterprise.

During a visit, Myrtle's father died at the ranch in January 1915. His estate was estimated to be worth \$100 million, much of which was left to the Macomers.

Soon after this, Samuel F. B. Morse was put in charge of liquidating the holdings of Pacific Improvement Company, which included the



Above 1951 photo of the Macomber mansion, below is from
1960 after the mansion was acquired by the company.
Julian P. Graham photographs from the
Pebble Beach Company Lagorio Archives



property in Del Monte Forest. Morse abandoned a plan for small lots along the coast in favor of selling much larger parcels; in the case of King Macomber, a very large parcel. In June 1916, Morse deeded 82 acres of Del Monte Forest to Macomber's Pacines Ranch Company with the stipulation that Macomber could not subdivide it for at least 50 years. This was well before Morse created building codes in favor of Mediterranean-style architecture and Macomber started clearing the lot using the Monterey Pines on the site to build a large log mansion. The mansion, designed by Lewis Hobart, was elaborate but rustic; ideal for entertaining. Morse described it in his memoir:

One hundred and fourteen years ago, Irene Grosvenor Wheelock (Birds of California 1903) declared California to be “the land of sunshine, flowers and bird song.” True to this day, the year-round beauty and birdlife of Pebble Beach have proved to be superlatives of Ms. Wheelock’s case. Here and today three songsters, all members of the Thrush family, celebrate the holiday season — and winter altogether — by feasting upon a bounty of bugs and berries. Of the latter “food group”, our native Christmas berry, or Toyon, appears at the top of the menu.



Mostly a winter visitor, the demure Hermit Thrush haunts the undergrowth and shrubby margins of backyard gardens, forest clearings, and wooded edges of our golf courses. This time of year its call is simple, something like a softly whispered “few,” but for its spring and summer voice it has been hailed

by ornithologists as “finest song bird of the Pacific Coast,” and the “most gifted songster.” The eminent California zoologist, Joseph Grinnell, in 1901 so described searching for the “Monterey Hermit Thrush” near Big Sur: “At first we were content with listening to its song which now and then swelled into a full melodious start only to die away in a far-off tinkle. Such a song has to be felt to be appreciated, for it seems to exert a hypnotic influence, inducing in one a sort of melancholy reverie.” My late friend, Prof. Noble Proctor, put the Hermit’s voice this way, “a series of flute-like echoing notes that seem to drift in the air for seconds after the song is delivered.” Alas, behold the secretive bird with a spotted breast whispering only a few words from underneath a berry bush.

A fierce finder and puller of earthworms, the American Robin is the largest, most abundant, broadly distributed and best-known of the North American thrushes. Our’s both reside here year-round and in greater numbers,



sometimes in flocks, appear in late fall for a winter stay-over. Generally, it’s worms and bugs (protein) when nesting, then Toyon, Pyracantha, and Coffeeberry (carbohydrates) when surviving the winter, California-style. Robins here nest in dense oak woodlands and riparian tangles, for example those

of Sawmill Gulch, Seal Rock Creek, and Pescadero Canyon. During springtime, in the early morning or late evening (before and after daylight), high over our own homes, listen for the territorial male robin, boldly red-breasted and probably perched at the top of a Monterey Pine: “cheerily, cheer up, cheerio, hissely.” By daylight, robins busily listen for, tug at, and capture meaty worms that hide below the surface of mowed lawns, fairways and greens. Then, while there may be a lot to sing about, there is little time for such fancies, especially when parents are feeding their prey to a nest full of the gaping maw. In your own words, Cheer up Mom and Dad for they soon will fledge!

Of the Western Bluebird,” the deep chestnut breast of the male and the rich blue of his outspread wings and tail are unmistakable,” according to Ralph Hoffman (Birds of the Pacific States 1927). Although more common here in winter, when arrived in airy and rumbly-tumbly flocks, Western Bluebirds are again nesting in Pebble Beach, and in increasing numbers.



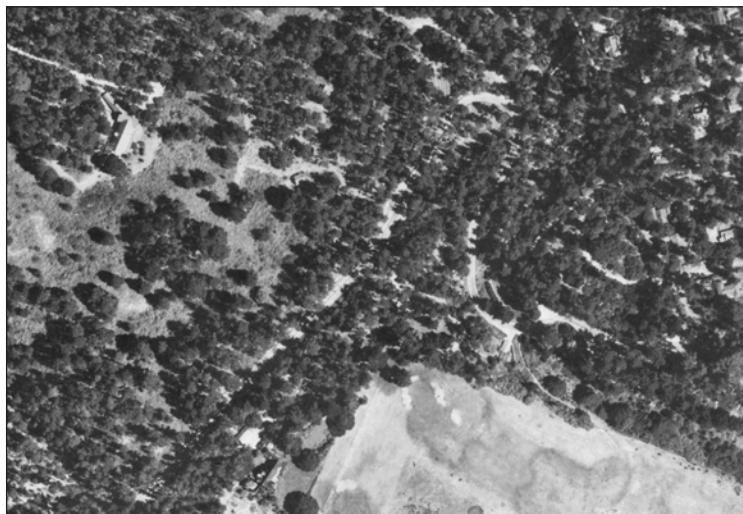
The bluebirds’ nests are made of woven grasses and lichens inside decadent pines and oaks that have been hollowed out by woodpeckers, typically in view of open fields and fairways, with backs to the woods and prevailing winds.

The living room is 90 feet long. The height goes up to the rafters above. At one end there is a musician's gallery, at the other end a bar, which is back of what looks like an intact log wall. Kingsley was fond of the dramatic. You press a button and up goes a portion of the log wall and there is the bar. The fireplace is high enough for a man 6 ft. tall to walk into. The dining room is also spacious, with its own huge fireplace, and he had a row of servants' rooms.

Ironically, it was not Macomber, but Morse, who soon wanted to divide Macomber's parcel, but only a bit of the lower acreage. The parcel extended down into the area soon planned for Pebble Beach Golf Links. Morse needed some of the Macomber land to move 17-Mile Drive inland and allow for some residential lots between the new golf course and the rerouted scenic road; Macomber was amenable.

Their growing friendship led to restoration of the old race track at Del Monte and creation of the Monterey Jockey Club in 1917. The club founders also included W.H. Crocker, August Belmont, Louis J. Hill and Rudolph Spreckels. While Macomber did not have a horse in the opening meet in Oct-Nov 1917, he was in attendance and sponsored the Macomber Handicap, a showcase of the final days' races.

Macomber abhorred Prohibition and he and Myrtle moved to France in 1920, where they continued breeding thoroughbreds. When King died in Paris in 1955, Morse threatened to sue the heirs if they tried to subdivide the holding at Del Monte. They sold the property back to the company in July 1958.



This aerial image from 1945 shows the Macomber mansion upper left, on the hill overlooking the 11th and 12th holes of Pebble Beach Golf Links (lower right). The break in the tree line angling center image is 17 Mile Drive.

For several years, Morse's son John made it his home. He and the company hosted many large parties there in the 1960s. After S.F.B. Morse died in 1969, the mansion sat empty and in April 1977, the once stately mansion was destroyed by fire, but the name survives on the property that was sold by the company in July 1978 and finally subdivided into estate lots by J. Lohr Properties in 1993. ☞



With this 1962 interior view we see a gathering in front of the large fireplace and how John and Virginia Morse used screens to break-up the large living room when they called it home.

Beautiful Songbirds (continued from page two)

The nesting birds' addresses are Cypress Point, Poppy Hills, Spyglass, and MPCC, and more. A gifted if underappreciated songster, its simple yet distinctive song to most human ears is but a chirpy pfeeew, or chu-chu; but to my colleague, Prof. Don Kroodsma, who is able to slow down the few songs on his computer, the "few songs" are revealed as a variety of phrases that the unaided human ear just misses: as many as

eight different phrases are beautifully uttered in just 10 seconds! So, take a walk alongside a golf course, listen up, and be aware, for

*The sky is falling!
One bit of blue then two
Come tumbling off the wing
And settle for a swing on the high wire...*
(from Karen Blackburn's Bits of Blue)



As you drive along 17 Mile Drive and come to Pescadero Point, you see a few live Cypress but mostly “ghost” trees. Indeed, the trees between 17 Mile Drive and the ocean take the brunt of the coastal weather. There is the signed ghost tree and the roped off “witch” tree that fell in January 1964. The Crocker Grove, more protected from the winds and the salt air, is home to the most natural and healthy stand of trees in Pebble Beach. The Monterey Cypress can be cultivated in other regions or climates but is most healthy in our cool summers and foggy days.

We all have a special relationship with Pebble Beach; this is our area of choice and our home. I am certain that we all choose to live here for various reasons; the beauty of the Del Monte Forest is one of those. Within our forest there are many diverse and unique plants and trees. The Monterey Cypress is one of them. These beautiful trees are located between Cypress Point and Pescadero Point.

The true Monterey Cypress occurs in two natural stands in California, Pebble Beach and a smaller stand at Point Lobos. The trees can be planted elsewhere but these are the only native stands.

The Crocker stand is quite small and for that reason requires special care from the Del Monte Forest Conservancy. Competitive plant life, natural fauna and humans take their toll on these trees. It is the Conservancy’s goal to eradicate invasive species in the grove. Our Native Monterey Pine trees also like this grove and it requires oversight to make certain the cypress have a chance to grow. Next time you are heading home, take the long way around 17 Mile Drive and appreciate this natural microhabitat of sculpted trees.

R. I. P. Comet

Comet, a National Disaster Search Dog, was sponsored by the Pebble Beach Riding & Trails Association. He was a great favorite with the Pebble Beach residents when attending “A Table Affair” each year with his handler, Fire Battalion Chief Michele Vaughn. The following are a few of Chief Vaughn’s reminiscences...

I was extremely fortunate to be a part of Comet’s life. Through him, I met and established lifelong relationships with people, while learning so much about the search and rescue world.



07/04/03 – 10/18/17

Comet was a Border collie on a team of Labrador Retrievers. He performed tasks very differently than the other dogs while showing my teammates, professional trainers and me that things don’t always have to be done the same way. He was a sophisticated special soul, I was fortunate to be his handler. I am very grateful to the Search Dog Foundation, Pluis and Kate Davern from Sundowners Kennels, and my

teammates on CATF4 for they all helped me establish my bond with Comet. Thank you to so many and especially dear Comet!

A Shore Thing

Story by Gina Gianfala
Photos by Brian Sullivan



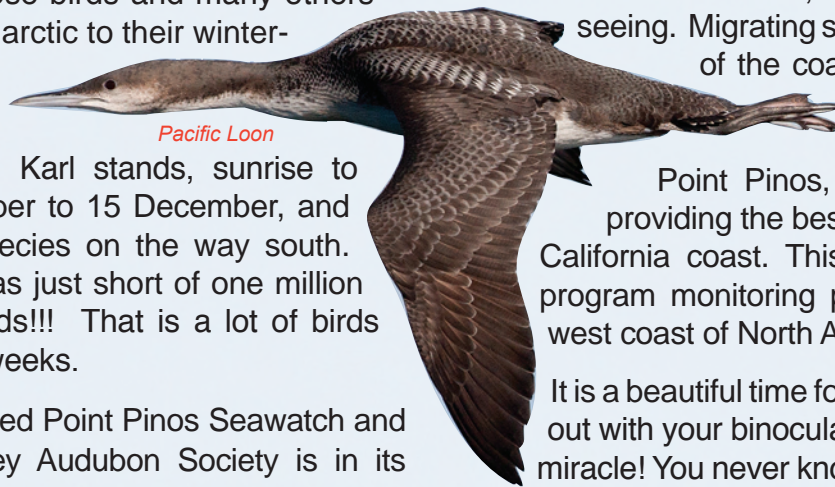
Surf Scoters



Something wonderful is happening in our skies! The fall seabird migration is in full swing. Here I am at Point Pinos across from the Lighthouse in Pacific Grove. High above me Surf Scoters in tight formation are moving south, shortly behind come the Pacific Loons. These birds and many others are migrating from the arctic to their winter-feeding grounds.

Next to me is Karl, the professional “counter”. Karl stands, sunrise to sunset from 1 November to 15 December, and counts all birds by species on the way south. Last year the count was just short of one million birds. One million birds!!! That is a lot of birds flying overhead in six weeks.

The count program called Point Pinos Seawatch and sponsored by Monterey Audubon Society is in its third year. The Facebook page (Facebook: Monterey Audubon) has up to date information and beautiful pictures. Counting species, while comparing results with the previous years, is a way to monitor the health of the bird population and the environment.



Pacific Loon

In addition to the expected birds, there may be the surprise of a rarity; last year a great frigate bird, normally found in the Galapagos, made its appearance flying past our viewpoint. The types and number of species vary; the weather, availability of food, wetlands that allow the birds to rest, all impact what we will be seeing. Migrating seabirds use the contours of the coastline for a navigational

tool; as the massive formation approaches Point Pinos, it makes a sharp turn providing the best viewpoint on the entire California coast. This is the only Seawatch program monitoring pelagic seabirds on the west coast of North America.

It is a beautiful time for bird watching, come on out with your binoculars and observe nature's miracle! You never know what you are going to see on or above the ocean. If you missed this year's event you can always visit the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History to see a world class exhibit of many of these birds and other native species.

- Gina Gianfala is a Pebble Beach resident and Bay Net volunteer

Upcoming DMFPO Seminar: The North Bay & Southern California Fires



Presented by CAL FIRE Spring of 2018

Learn about how wind affects fires, and the factors that combined to create a repeat of Napa area firestorms from 50 years ago occurring in the same burn footprint. Become familiar with the similarities and differences in our urban/wildland area and steps you can take to be prepared in the event of fire or other disasters.

DATE AND TIME TO BE DETERMINED

AN INVITATION POSTCARD WILL BE MAILED 3 WEEKS PRIOR

Pebble Beach Community Services District Community Room Forest Lake and Lopez Roads, Pebble Beach

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The invitation for 2018 membership in the Del Monte Forest Property Owners is inside. For convenience, dues can be submitted through the DMFPO website.

Visit <http://www.dmfpo.org> for dates and times of events and meetings

New Hiking & Equestrian Trails Map Available on Mobile Device

A new revision (April 2017) of the Del Monte Forest Hiking & Equestrian Trails map has been produced, with the combined sponsorship of DMFPO, the Del Monte Forest Conservancy, the Pebble Beach Company, Pebble Beach Community Services District, and CAL FIRE. Paper copies of the new map are available at the DMFPO Office, and a PDF copy is available on the DMFPO website at www.dmfpo.org.

The new map is also available on your mobile device using the GPS-enabled Maplets app for iPhone, iPad or Android mobile phones. The Maplets app can be downloaded to your iPhone or iPad from the App Store (cost for the app is \$2.99), or to your Android phone from Amazon using the Amazon Underground app.



Once the Maplets app is installed on your mobile phone or iPad, you can download a copy of the DMF Hiking & Equestrian Trails map to your device. The app will plot your current position on the map using GPS, and once downloaded, the map works on your mobile device regardless of whether cell service is available.

The Maplets app also has a feature which allows the user to capture the GPS coordinates of their current position on the map, copy them on your device, email or text message them, or share them on Facebook or Twitter. This feature may be useful

in emergencies, for reporting trail damage or obstructions to the DMFPO Hiking & Equestrian Trails Committee for follow-up.

Please go to www.mobilemaplets.com for more information on this application.