



Santa Barbara's Royal Rancho: The fabulous history of Los Dos Pueblos

Walker A Tompkins

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Dos Pueblos bears one of California's oldest place-name, christened by Cabrillo during his voyage of discovery in 1542. Dubbed a "royal rancho" by historians because it was a gift of King Carlos III of Spain, Dos Pueblos was intended to support Mission Santa Barbara during the presidio period following Santa Barbara's founding in 1782. The first private owner, Irish-born Nicholas A. Den, a medical man, was awarded ownership of the ranch in 1842 by Mexican governor Juan B. Alvarado. When Col. John C. Fremont came over the mountain to seize Santa Barbara for the U.S. during the Mexican War, he emerged onto Dos Pueblos Ranch. During the Gold Rush of '49, Den made his fortune selling Dos Pueblos beef to mining camps. Following Den's death in 1862 the ranch was subdivided among his widow and numerous children. Before and after the turn of the century Royal Ranch was the scene of many diverse activities. One of its later owners bred racehorses. Another converted Dos Pueblos into the world's largest orchid farm. A major oil company established off-shore petroleum production from pumps operated on the ranch. At the present time the historic spread specializes in such exotic crops as macadamia, cherimoyas and avocados

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