

# The Great Tidepool

## TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA

by local award-winning author, [Brad Herzog](#)



## CITY OF MURALS

A quarter-century ago, when longtime resident Irene Masteller was asked why she wanted to tell the story of Pacific Grove's origins via a mural along a recreation trail, she answered, "Art should be everywhere, not just captive in museums or for the privileged few." Such thinking permeates PG, where a multitude of outdoor murals surprise and delight.

The **Pacific Grove Historical Mural** along the rec trail between Lovers Point and Berwick Park is a four-panel mural conceived painted on a concrete wall by artist John Ton in 1997. The mural's purpose: to unite disparate groups by celebrating PG's culturally diverse past, from native tribes to Chinese fishermen to Methodist retreaters. Irene Masteller called it a "wall of reconciliation."

But it's one of many PG murals that turn concrete into canvas. The oldest is **Paseo de los Padres (Path of the Fathers)**, created by artists Bernard McDonagh and Richard Still in 1968. It decorates the Central Avenue Pharmacy and depicts various incarnations of California history, from explorers and farmers to John Steinbeck and Robert Louis Stevenson. Seven years later, PG artist Kate Elvin painted a mural on what was then The Granary Health Food Store on Central Avenue (now Happy Girl Kitchen). **The Granary Mural** features a group of picnickers, as well as the artist herself (paintbrush in hand).

That's not the only picnic mural in PG. The long blank wall that goes the length of Grove Market's parking lot has been transformed. In 2002, artist Juanita Anderson created a **Victorian Picnic** on the right side of the wall, dedicated to those "who enjoy our diverse cultural heritage and all those who appreciate art." Fourteen years later, artist Jerry Boyajian created a 4 x 40-foot mural on the left side. It celebrates Salinas Valley farmland and the old Del Monte Express train that ran through PG.

Boyajian has been a sign painter in PG for more than 40 years. His signs are all over town; lately, his murals are, too, including one featuring an adorable sea otter (on the parking lot wall of the



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Animal Friends Rescue Project) and another on a wall of Mum's Place furniture store that shows a scene at the same address (246 Forest Avenue) a century ago.



Going back even further, Pacific Grove Cleaners is sadly closing its doors after nearly a century as a family business, but a mural on its wall known as **Jim Jim's Wedding** endures—by artist Merlin Brown and depicting a traditional Chinese wedding in PG at the turn of the 20th century.



Three of PG's most striking murals tell a more contemporary story. **Green Seas, Blue Seas**, designed by Ray Troll and painted in 32 panels by Roberto Salas and Guillermo Jauregui in 2007, is a 400-foot masterpiece that encircles the former National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration building amid the dunes at 1352 Lighthouse Avenue. It colorfully tells the story of Monterey Bay's marine life—with a hidden wink or two (i.e. a slice of pizza among the sardines and sea turtles).



Another mural creation celebrates breaking waves—or actually, the PG Breakers. In 2021, talented artist Bryan Gage, a Pacific Grove High alumnus, added color to the high school's field house in the form of a vibrant 10 x 70-foot mural featuring the PG Breakers' red and gold, a lighthouse and the mural's title exhortation: **"PG Will Shine Tonight."** Just a few hundred feet away, a couple of murals adorn Forest Grove Elementary School's kindergarten classroom and library—showing jellyfish and a soaring falcon.



Finally, there's one PG mural created entirely by amateurs. I'll call it the **Mini-Artists' Mosaic** at Gibson Avenue and 17th Street. It's a 2009 creation of "The Diana Kids"—that is, the little ones who were part of Diana Dennis's daycare program and who will forever be immortalized by a mosaic made from seashells, necklaces, forks, a hula doll, hot wheels cars, a key, a calculator, you name it.

So there you have it. Every work of public art tells a tale. By touring PG's murals, we celebrate the story of a place and its people.

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