

The Great Tide Pool

TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA

by local award-winning author, Brad Herzog

APPOINTED ROUNDS

December 15, 2025



In Pacific Grove's infancy, before the roads were paved and the city was incorporated, when tent cabins were the primary residence, mail was distributed the old-fashioned way. A wagon bearing a huge mailbag would arrive daily from Monterey, a ground superintendent would stand on a platform, and everyone would gather as close as possible so that they could answer their called name with a robust "Here!"

But in 1885, a rumor started spreading, revealed in a newspaper called the *Del Monte Wave*: "The report is current that the Grove is soon to shake off its allegiance to Monterey, and with Uncle Sam's permission, have its own post office." This came true the following year. PG's first post office arrived, overseen by a fellow named John Norton. It was located in a one-room building next to Lloyd's Vegetable Store. One-stop shopping for correspondence and cucumbers.

Within a decade, the post office had moved to a large room on Forest Avenue, but it wasn't until 1938 that it moved into its current building – a then-\$54,000 edifice parked between Lighthouse and Central avenues. More than one thousand residents and guests attended the opening ceremony, along with the PG High School band.

Eighty-seven years later, it still stands as an arguably underappreciated icon. I can't count the number of times I've stopped in there over the years to pick up mail, buy some stamps, send a package. But a post office – indeed, mail delivery itself – tends to be the kind of thing many of us take for granted. So I wondered: What does it take to keep the mail going?

On a national level, the numbers are jaw-dropping: On average, the U.S. Postal Service processes 318 million pieces of mail each day – that's 3,684 each second. There are nearly 140,000 iconic blue collection boxes in use on street corners across the nation. The USPS delivers to 153 million addresses in 41,642 zip codes, covering roughly 1.2 million miles. Or there's this statistic: Nearly 6,000 mail carriers are actually attacked by dogs each year. "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." Nor labradoodles.



But what about a small town like Pacific Grove? It's still a lot. The latest information I could gather reveals that the PG postmaster oversees more than two-dozen employees who process and deliver more than 34,000 pieces of mail daily to 1,500-plus P.O. boxes and more than 8,600 delivery points (addresses) on 14 city routes. Whew.

But, of course, the PG post office is more than just a working delivery system. As post offices go, it's a warm and inviting place. Outside the entrance is a life-sized "Butterfly Children" sculpture, capturing in bronze the every-October whimsy of kindergartners masquerading as monarchs. Inside, you'll find a 4-by-15-foot "Lovers Point" mural depicting an idyllic beach scene. Painted by Ukrainian artist Victor Arnautoff, it has adorned PG's post office since 1940.

So the next time you stop in to send a letter first class or choose a set of stamps, take a moment to soak in your surroundings. And the next time you happen upon your mail carrier stuffing the day's delivery into your mailbox – particularly during the busy holiday season – be sure to thank them. Even if they're delivering bills.