

The Great Tide Pool

TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA

by local award-winning author, Brad Herzog

DRY NO MORE

June 15, 2025



There used to be a saying: "There is only one Pacific Grove in all the world. Let it be a place where liquor is neither served nor sold." In the early days of America's Last Hometown, when the morals of the Methodist Retreat that spawned the town still dominated the scene and the resulting Blue Laws were still in effect, the superintendent of the grounds bragged that "out of all the resorts on the coast, Pacific Grove is the only place where you can say as a fact that you are entirely clear of all objectionable things that are usually found where large crowds of people congregate. No whiskey, wine or cider is sold, no dancing or carousing..." When he was asked when the rules and regulations governing the Retreat would end, he answered: "Judgment Day."

Or 1969. In January of that year, nearly a century after its infancy, residents voted to allow beer and liquor stores with city limits, ending PG's run as the last "dry town" in California. Appropriately, perhaps, alcohol was first served on Independence Day that year - by PG icon Elmarie Dyke at the grand opening of the Pacific Grove Art Center. Now, more than half a century later, PG has entered a heyday of sorts for those who like to complement their day of serenity with a drink or two.

It might be argued that the renaissance began nine years ago with the launch of Pacific Grove Ciderworks. Tim Calvert had been a home-kitchen cider maker for a quarter-century - hard apple cider and pear cider (perry) - and family and friends suggested he turn his hobby into a business. So in 2016, he made that a reality, brewing everything from dry cider to (perhaps the first-ever) pear port.

Though Ciderworks is permanently closed, it opened the floodgates for PG-inspired beverages. In fact, in 2019, the Pacific Grove name became attached to a beer label. Charles Tope - a member of a large and longtime PG family - introduced Pacific Grove Brewing Company and its California Golden Ale, which he described as "not so much for the beer connoisseur, but a clean easy-drinker for the everyday person." Tope trademarked "California's Last Dry Town," made it available in 16-ounce cans and kegs, and sold it throughout Monterey County.

The Great
Tidepool





Now, PG has its own brick-and-mortar brewer – Hops and Fog Brewing Company, a restaurant and nanobrewery (all small batches) at 511 Lighthouse Avenue, the former site of a laundromat. From its opening last summer, the craft brewpub – co-owned by Mike Durrant and Ximena Waissbluth – has drawn Pagrovians eager for a hip vibe to accompany their hops. Although Hops and Fog offers beers from other regional breweries, they started pouring their own brews, starting with a light West Coast IPA called (naturally) First Batch. That was followed up by the likes of Saucy Otter (a nut brown ale), Blueberry Hill (a fruited strong sour) and Randazzle Cider (a sweet sparkling hard cider), all of which well wash down wood-fired pizzas with names like Apple of my Pie and Pizza Fungi.

With events like speed dating and a school's-out high school dance party, Hops and Fog has also contributed to a newfound vibrancy on the PG scene. That new (again, dare I say hip?) vibe includes Pop & Hiss at 215 Forest Avenue, which is part record store, part full-bar, and part live music venue (offering everything from bluegrass and folk to punk and hip-hop).

Of course, there are a great many more options in Pacific Grove. Grab a Guinness at Monarch Pub. Order an amaro – an after-dinner liqueur – at Mezzaluna Pasteria. Try a cocktail called a Michaelangelo at il Vecchio. Pour a pinot noir at Passionfish. You can raise at glass at Fandango and Fishwife, PG Meetinghouse and Red House Café, Beach House and Spotted Duck, International Cuisine and during Asilomar Conference Center's spring-and-summer, sips-and-songs Social Hour.

The evolution of Pacific Grove doesn't mean that the Sanctuary by the Sea is becoming a Central Coast version of Pottersville in *It's a Wonderful Life*. No, it's still more of a Bedford Falls – an idyllic respite, tranquil and timeless. But now the sounds of crashing waves and distant sea lions can be accompanied by clinking glasses. So cheers to options!