

# The Great Tide Pool

**TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA**  
by local award-winning author, [Brad Herzog](#)



## FROM CLOSED OFF TO OPEN ARMS

When I tell friends around the country what's special about Pacific Grove, I often use words like simple, serene, scenic—and welcoming. But things weren't always so relaxed and inviting. Having begun as a Methodist retreat in the 1870s, the town was a decidedly puritanical place in its infancy, brimming with blue laws.

Fishing, boating and bathing (presumably swimming) were prohibited on the Sabbath, as was the sale of anything but medicine. Bathing suits had to have skirts that "covered the buttocks." Dancing was off-limits early on—in fact, one law specifically cited "the tango, turkey-trot, bunny-hug, or shimmie." One visitor wrote, "Among the forbidden fruits are waltzing, playing the zither, reading the great Sunday dailies, selling popcorn on the beach, and playing ten pins." And, of course, "The buying, selling or giving away of any and all intoxicants, spirituous liquors, wine, beer, or cider" were prohibited "within one mile of the center of the original survey of the Retreat." Remarkably, P.G. remained a dry town until 1969, supposedly California's very last.

Unsurprisingly, that same guest wrote that the various laws were "deadening to visitors." In fact, the effect had a physical symbol in the form of a fence that encircled the area—with a locked main gate. This came to a dramatically satisfying conclusion one day: A state senator named Benjamin Langford, who owned a weekend home near the waterfront and chafed at the inconvenience of having to unlock the gate any time he visited, took an axe to the gate one evening. It was the beginning of the end of Pacific Grove's keep-out vibe.

Now, of course, P.G. opens its arms to guests. The fence has been supplanted by a sign—"Welcome to Pacific Grove... Butterfly Town U.S.A."



The once dry town now has several breweries within its boundaries—Pacific Grove Ciderworks, Pacific Grove Brewing Company, Hops and Fog Brewing Company. You can enjoy a Guinness at the Monarch Pub & Restaurant, a Wango Mango hard seltzer at California Seltzer Company, a San Simeon Sauvignon Blanc at il vecchio, or a Pineapple and Cardamom Daiquiri at Mezzaluna Pasteria.



The once dance-free locale now enthusiastically gathers for a Shoe Dance in the late summer. There's a Chautauqua Hall Dance Club and a RockStar Dance Studio. No popcorn on the beach? Now you can grab a Belgian waffle and a cappuccino at Lovers Point Beach Café.

And on a typical Sunday at the park and beach at Lovers Point, you won't just find people "bathing." They're also surfing and sun-worshiping and snorkeling and piloting a surrey along the coast.

So, as we approach the sesquicentennial of our sanctuary by the sea, I believe Pacific Grove's evolution is something to be celebrated. In fact, the Monarch butterflies that migrate here every fall have become very much a modern symbol—a welcome home, a return visit, an invitation to an enchanting experience.

*The Great  
Tidepool*