

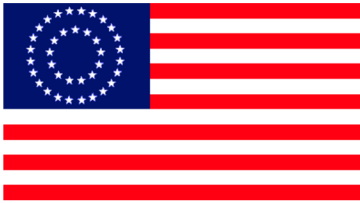
The Great Tide Pool

TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA

by local award-winning author, Brad Herzog

SESQUICENTENNIAL

June 1, 2025



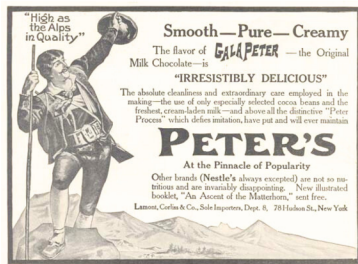
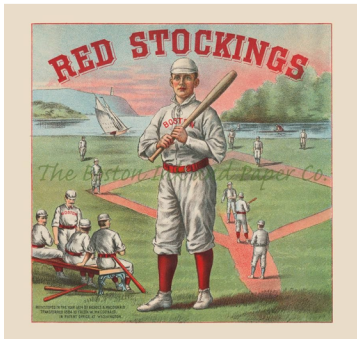
This month marks a sesquicentennial of sorts for Pacific Grove. I'm not talking about the 150th anniversary of the city – PG was officially incorporated in 1889. No, I'm referencing earlier origins – the moment when PG transitioned from an idea to a reality. On June 1, 1875 the Pacific Grove Retreat Association was formed in San Francisco, the goal being creation of what was called the Christian Seaside Resort, an encampment of wood-framed tents on 30-by-60-foot lots sold for \$50 apiece. That first year, about a dozen tents were set up, accommodating about 50 people.

That was a LONG time ago, only a decade removed from the U.S. Civil War and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. So I wondered: What was happening during the infancy of Pacific Grove? What was life like in 1875? Let's take a closer look.

In the big picture, the United States was completing a rapid shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy. Ulysses Grant was president, and there were roughly 40 million Americans, about the same total as the current population of California. In fact, the U.S. flag was adorned with only 37 stars, designed in the form of a couple of concentric circles. With the exception of California and Nevada, the westernmost U.S. state was... Texas.

The year of Pacific Grove's inception brought a wave of inventions. A Swiss entrepreneur named Daniel Peter perfected a method of using powdered milk to manufacture... milk chocolate. In Kalamazoo, Michigan, George Green devised an electric-powered device to drill teeth. Siegfried Marcus patented an internal combustion engine. And Thomas Edison found a way to duplicate documents. The telephone? The phonograph? The electric light bulb? They didn't exist yet.

There were a number of iconic sports firsts, as well, 25 years before the 20th century. The first recorded indoor hockey game took place in Montreal. Harvard played Yale in football for the first time. Aristides won the first-ever Kentucky Derby. The champion of the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players? The Boston Red Stockings.



The Great
Tidepool



In 1875, a necktie cost 10 cents. You could pay with a 20-cent piece and get change. One pound of coffee? Twenty-five cents. A suit? Ten dollars. And for about one dollar - equivalent to roughly \$28 today - you could buy a pair of shoes, a pair of Levi Strauss blue jeans, or a ticket to the opera in San Francisco.

Queen Victoria was in her 38th year on the British throne when Pacific Grove was spawned on the majestic Monterey Peninsula. Winston Churchill was a toddler. Hans Christian Anderson, Brigham Young and Crazy Horse were still around. But there was another remarkable happening that year: A woman named Jeanne Calment was born in France. She would eventually - a long eventuality - become the oldest independently verified person in human history, surviving a total of 122 years and 164 days. Charles Darwin was still alive in her youth; Charles Barkley was nearly retired when she died.

In fact, Jeanne Clement was born the same year as Pacific Grove and held on until August 1997, a couple of months after I moved to town. So maybe the distant past isn't so distant after all.