

The Great Tide Pool

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



A PINEY PARADISE

A Piney Paradise. That's the name of a book, written by Lucy Neely McLane, entirely about the early history of Pacific Grove. It was first published in 1952, closer to the year of PG's incorporation as a city (1889) than to today. It was last updated in 1975, just before the author passed away at the age of 85. The book - there are a few copies in the PG Public Library - is a jewel about a jewel. So I tried it on for size, surfing through its 382 pages.

There are consistent reminders throughout about just how long ago this book was written - the language used, the worldview expressed, even practical matters. For instance, McLane marvels at the Pacific Grove Hotel guest who paid \$16.50 (more than \$400 today) for three minutes of long-distance phone conversation with her husband in 1917. Then the author adds, "Today, a call would cost \$2.50!"

"Every place is a state of mind. Intangibles make Pacific Grove peculiarly such a place," McLane wrote. "To some extent this history of her early life will satisfy the reader's curiosity; but the best any writer can do for the Monterey Peninsula is what the golden dome of the State House does for the setting sun, and that is to reflect a little of it."

So let's take a trip through Pacific Grove through the eyes of Lucy Neely McLane as she reflects:

p. 162 - On earliest Pacific Grove: "Before Pacific Grove became the site of the summer Methodist camp meetings, her grove of pine trees and alluring coastline attracted many peninsula visitors. Here came the Spanish grandees each with his entourage to spend a day picnicking. Here came the artist and the dreamer. Doubtless, too, the banditti and the piratical marauders found hiding places in the huge forest both by night and by day."

p. 124 - On the road to Point Pinos Lighthouse: "Until 1874, the roads or trails zigzagged from the Lighthouse to Monterey across sand dunes, by the sea or over the hills through the woods. Provisions were brought to the Lighthouse station in mule-drawn wagons. If cream chanced to be on its way to the Lighthouse, the jolting of the wagon did the trick of churning it into butter."

p. 102 – On PG’s earliest residents: “A New England Village was being created in the West; for these first inhabitants of the Grove brought with them traditions, tastes, and ideals of the conservative Atlantic seaboard.”

p. 147 – On civic involvement: ““Everybody’s business is nobody’s business” can often be applied to city governing, but in Pacific Grove, quite to the contrary, almost everybody makes what would otherwise be nobody’s business his business. If the town is not run to suit everybody, soon the problem becomes everybody’s business; and everybody takes a hand in fixing things.”

p. 39 – On Pagrovians: “The people of Pacific Grove are happy with what they have; they laugh at critics from the outside who don’t have what they have, and they figure that as long as Pacific Grove is a City of Homes it can rest in inaction when it does not need to act and go into concerted action when the need arises; in other words, it can take care of itself.”

p. 125 – On PG’s moral character: “Pacific Grove, like an individual, possesses moral as well as physical characteristics. The individual, whatever his physical beauty may be, is of value to himself and the community only in proportion to his moral development and strength. The same holds good in relation to the city. The force that molds a community to high ideals and right thinking, the organization or individual that holds aloft before a community the flaming torch of education, patriotism, state loyalty, civic pride, and municipal and individual right living, builds the city in far more gracious beauty and greatness than is ever attained by the rearing of stately buildings or commercial institutions. Therefore, not Pacific Grove town-pattern, not Pacific Grove buildings, but rather her family makes her what she is.”

So there you have it: a book offering a glimpse into yesteryear and a reminder that the more things change, the more they stay the same. And some things are just timeless.

*The Great
Tidepool*

