

The Great Tidepool

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

SHARED STORIES



What best represents neighborly collaboration and a creative community with a storied history? I'd answer this: Little Free Libraries. Pacific Grove is positively brimming with them—at least 44, by my count. Stroll along Sinex Avenue, for instance, and you'll spot tiny "leave a book, take a book" creations at four addresses—**420, 847, 895 and 1117**. Nearly every neighborhood in town offers a literary walking tour, whether you're passing **330 Gibson** or **507 Beaumont** or **833 Maple** or **999 Benito Court**.

Certainly, any visitor to the intersection of Short and Granite has been bowled over by book exchanges on all four corners. There's a magazine box shaped like a British phone booth at **227 Granite**, a lighthouse-themed LFL at **231 Granite**, another at **232 Granite**, and lots of looney lending libraries among the whimsy at **226 Granite**—cookbooks in a toy plastic pizza oven, nonfiction in a little red schoolhouse, and young adult books in a replica wooden clocktower. Indeed, many Pagrovians try to make their little libraries distinctive. Some have been given names. At **1042 Jewell**: Cookie's Library. At **631 Laurel**: Bella's Book Bungalow. At **1217 Lawton**: Lawton Lego Library, with the decorations to prove it. The little libraries at **109 Forest** and **1207 Funston** are covered in seashells. At **402 2nd Street**, the door handles are tiny pewter mermaids. Dr. Seuss stickers are affixed to the LFL at **271 Spruce**. And **310 Locust** is a work of art, looking like a Little Free Monet.

We certainly didn't invent these book exchanges. That officially happened in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 2012. In fact, LittleFreeLibrary.org actually tracks a registry of these mini marvels—some 150,000 in more than 100 countries on all seven continents. Yes, including Antarctica. You can even zoom in on a world map to find any of them. So the LLF at **154 11th Street** is registered as #22663, and the one at **1138 Ripple** is #46578, and **210 8th** is #122416.

These LFLs aren't offering merely throwaway reads. I found Catch-22 **Spruce** and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* at **440 Beaumont**, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* at **1232 Surf** and John Grisham's



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A *Time to Kill* at **234 Bentley**, Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* at **616 Lobos** and Liane Moriarty's *Big Little Lies* at **430 Gibson**. The latter, of course, became a TV series filmed in PG. Waiting for a bus on **Montecito Avenue**? There's an LFL at the stop. Picking up your child at **Forest Grove Elementary** or **PG Middle School**? Pick up a free book, too. Sometimes you'll have to sleuth them out. The one at **706 Sunset** is semi-hidden behind a chest-high orange wall, and the LFLs at **1327 Miles** and **1335 David** are located at the end of dead-end streets. Not much foot traffic. But sometimes if you're lucky, you'll spot the process in action. As I stared into the selection at **277 Grove Acre**, a woman behind me said, "Excuse me, I just want to leave a book." She held a dog leash in one hand and *White Tiger* in the other.

Indeed, the wonderful thing about these little libraries is that the books travel. Next week, John Cheever's short story collection at **715 17th Street** might find its way to the little library at **511 9th Street**... or **218 Crocker**... or **161 Del Monte**. The three Clive Cussler novels at **725 Pine** might someday migrate to **231 Lobos**... or **514 Park**... or **1105 Seaview**. So, we're sharing stories the way a community should—only in this case, it's literal.

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