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Beyond Words

ESSAYS ON ART AND HEALING

Rollin Pickford | *Pico and Asilomar, 1996*

WATERCOLOR ON PAPER

Made possible by a gift from Maurine Church Coburn

Rollin Pickford, 97, can remember sitting at the corner of Pico and Asilomar in Pacific Grove, one of his favorite spots on earth. He loved looking up at the big, high dunes and watching his family run up and down the sand as he sat, with his board and his big straw hat, painting. Sometimes his family would come in from a bike ride or a walk, and find him there, painting those stick fences and big fallen pine trees he loved so well. Often they would bring him lunch and then linger a moment, to watch. Although home for

him is the San Joaquin Valley, Pacific Grove has always been his spiritual haven, a summer refuge in the fog.

Pico and Asilomar held special significance for a Pacific Grove family whose mother was very ill and needed to go to the hospital. But she was reluctant to leave the security of her home near Asilomar and Pico until she saw the painting of her neighborhood, which brought her peace and eased her transition.



Rollin Pickford | 400 Beaumont St., Pacific Grove, 1996

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What Melissa Pickford remembers most about 400 Beaumont St., Pacific Grove, is how much her father loved it, loved staying there in the summers to escape the oppressive heat of the San Joaquin Valley, loved to sit just outside the house to paint among the roses, loved painting the Monterey pines that defined the property.

Rollin Pickford enjoyed painting the historic Pacific Grove corners and beaches nearby, but sometimes just painting at home was enough. He would sit in the shade of a tree or under the eaves of the house and find shapes and

colors which would intrigue him. Often his wife Glenna read aloud to him as he worked so they could share books together.

Once, during a brief stay in the hospital, Melissa was wheeled into her room and looked up to find one of her father's paintings on the wall. "It was so nice, under those circumstances," she says, "to be greeted by my father's work. Having art in the hospital humanizes the experience and lifts you up out of the pain and medication to the sublime part of life to which you want to return."

