

President's Message

“Oh! There’s no place like home for the holidays [. . .]” So starts the 1954 holiday standard, crooned by Perry Como. (Note to Millennials: look him up on Wikipedia!) As Thanksgiving quickly approaches, crimson swatches of autumn’s brilliance mark the hillsides of Kentfield and Greenbrae. My turkey is ordered and the menu is pretty much planned. Generations of Turkey Bowl athletes are likely limbering up in hopes that they’ll be able to play all four quarters of this Thursday’s game on the college of Marin fields.

While we’ve been bombarded for months with Christmas marketing, the preparations and festivities will start in earnest before we’ve had a chance to take that last bite of our turkey sandwiches. Take a moment to savor historian Dewey Livingston’s description of community traditions of the past and Beth Ashley’s 1990’s reflections on celebrating during troubled times. (Perhaps her words will give you pause, as they did me: her words eerily echo today’s concerns.)

Please come and see us in December at our new location in Bon Air Center. We love to hear your stories of Greenbrae and Kentfield and enjoy sharing what we’ve learned about our communities.

A week and half ago, my New York-based son surprised me with a text: “Save some turkey for me! I will be home for Thanksgiving!” With a smile on my face, I ordered a larger turkey.

In the midst of the world’s uncertainties, I hope you each find joy in this season of celebration and festivities!

Susan Morrow
KGHS President, 2015-2016

KGHS Pop Up Museum & Store Saturdays in December

The Kentfield-Greenbrae Pop Up Museum and Store

Join us at our NEW LOCATION...140 Bon Air Center (next to David M. Brian)

OPEN the first three Saturdays in December...

December 5th, 12th and 19th from 11 am to 3 pm

KGHS will be displaying new historical posters, showing slides of vintage photos and selling:

*In the Heart of Marin: A History of Kentfield and Greenbrae
Historical Reflections, Oral History Projects*

and introducing our

NEW KGHS BIRTHDAY CALENDAR

along with other merchandise for yourself, family and/or friends.

Merchandise specials available only at the store.

Membership Update

A new round of renewal notices are in the mail. We don't want to lose you and hope that you will remember the Kentfield-Greenbrae Historical Society by renewing your membership at a level that is comfortable for you.

DO IT ONLINE NOW before you forget! ... www.kghs.org

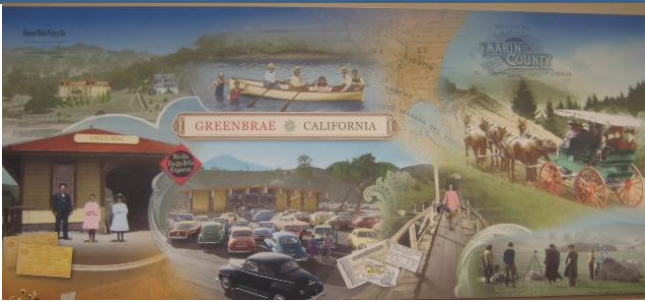
- \$20 - Students & Seniors
- \$30 - Individuals & Families
- \$50 - Business Membership
- \$100 - Patron
- \$250 - Benefactor *
- \$500 - Historian *
- \$1000 + - Lifetime Membership*

*tote bags

Or you can send a check: KGHS Membership, Box 236, Kentfield, CA 94914. Please include your name, level of membership, address, email and phone number. Included with your membership is the bi-monthly/quarterly newsletter, special invitations to member events and an invitation to volunteer on one of our committees.

We are currently developing curriculum for Third Grade students, starting a History Club at Kent Middle School, planning a Community May Day Picnic on May 7 (a mini version of the Centennial Celebration,) developing an exhibit and lecture on George Demont Otis in conjunction with the College of Marin and the California Room of the MCFL, and a few other activities. Please pass this newsletter on to your friends and encourage them to join the KGHS. Your support will allow us to continue to enrich the lives of students and the community. This all can be done on our website www.kghs.org.

New Wells Fargo Mural features Greenbrae History



Greenbrae Mural, Wells Fargo Bank 2015

The Greenbrae Branch of the Wells Fargo Bank has just installed a beautiful new mural inside its lobby. The photos of families and historical places of interest came from the archives of the Kentfield Greenbrae Historical Society, with color added by the designer. Do you recognize anyone or any place? A legend on the wall will help.

The Turkey Bowl...A 50 Year History ... Ross Gondak

The Turkey Bowl #50 November 26, 2015 10 am at the College of Marin Stadium

We consider our game "The Turkey Bowl" but that is simply our own inconsiderate opinion based on the knowledge that the world revolves around us. There may be several other local "historians" who might provide additional or contradictory input but as I recollect the first "The Turkey Bowl" was played at Greenbrae School on a very muddy Thanksgiving day almost 50 years ago. That year we had Turkey Bowl players representing Redwood High classes 1965 through 1971 (Kent 1961-1967) and we played by tackle football rules. Two future NFL head coaches (Bruce Coslet and Pete Carroll) were in the game as well as several accomplished college football players ...and no old guys. Notably that day, Dave Cox of MCAL fame, ran 100+ yards untouched for a touchdown ...but his end zone celebration was dampened when he discovered that everyone who had pretended to tackle him (but missed on purpose) was laying on the field laughing.

Every year since then "The Turkey Bowl" games have been held on all the local fields...Kent, Bacich, Redwood, Piper Park and now the Bowl is hosted at College of Marin. We haven't been kicked off there yet because that field has already been classified as "hazardous" and we're all insured now so no one cares. This year is our 50th "The Turkey Bowl" and we still expect to see a good group of originals, offspring and friends out for the game...Now, almost all attendees are old guys, we play by touch football rules and two-toned Footjoys are sometimes substituted for Riddell speed cleats. Many players are well over 60 and still play all four quarters but the quarters are much shorter and the number of retired "official assistant coaches" lounging on the sidelines grows every year.



Turkey Bowl team 2013 (Ross Gondak Collection)



Turkey Bowl in 1940's (Kamp collection)

Holiday Traditions in Greenbrae... Dewey Livingston

.. With the first new homes in place in 1947, the Greenbrae Co. started an annual Christmas home decoration contest, judged by non-residents and offering a \$50 first prize and many secondary cash prizes and gifts. The Greenbrae Property Owners Association took over the sponsorship of the holiday events in 1948 while the Greenbrae Co. continued to offer prizes.

Jeff Craemer remembered that people " would go all out to decorate their houses." Every Christmas season his family drove all over Greenbrae to look, and there would always be a feature in the local paper. People came from other towns to look, as well. "The vast number of sightseers who have driven through the tract during the past week have been impressed by the mechanical presentations," claimed the *Independent* in December 1947, "including a Santa Claus who actually rides a reindeer in front of the J. M. Heath home at 41 Corte Morada, and the snow man who repeatedly gets his hat knocked off by a snowball in the home of the Ralph Brears on Bretano Way."

"My dad was always trying to win, he was quite mechanical and did a lot of stuff that was really fun, with moving things and all," recalled Butch Brear, "but there was a guy that lived on Almenar who always beat my dad, he'd have these motorized things. There was a lot of competition in those days." That guy was no doubt Frank Volta at 71 Almenar who, with his wife, won the 1952 countywide contest with their holiday-themed railroad, as described in the local paper.

The winning decoration is an animated train on which Mr. and Mrs. Volta worked two and a half

months during evenings and weekends to complete. The train moves on a track layout with Santa waving from the cab of the locomotive. There are lights on the train, a dispatcher on the caboose, a man oiling the wheels, and even a hobo riding the rods of one car.

There were years worth of memorable decorations. The winner in 1956 was the Onorato family at 63 Almenar, with their "unusual snow scene complete with an old fashioned sleigh full of presents in a setting reminiscent of Currier and Ives." In 1958 Pietro Pinoni created "Pietro's Christmas Kitchen" to win the top prize. Andrea Schulz noted that the decoration contest ended with the energy shortage of the 1970's.

Kentfield Fire Department Annual Christmas Party

The Kentfield Fire Department has a good reputation for its- community service, which continues to this day. Besides the traditional schoolchildren tours, the Kentfield Fire District's main annual community outreach was the Christmas party. Volunteer firemen sold tickets and bought and wrapped presents for different age groups. On the second floor meeting hall, the firemen hosted a party for the kids in town. Each got a present and a big stocking full of goodies, and there was a raffle and entertainment. The budget in 1934 was for \$20 and included purchasing the toys and refreshments for all the local children!

Dave Pekonen remembers his father, an engineer at the KTIM Tower, playing Santa in the 40's. The event ended when, according to David Manahan, the population became too big to handle. Later, the Kentfield Association of Firefighter's annual pancake breakfast replaced the Christmas party, continuing a long tradition of KFD involvement in the community.

- *In the Heart of Marin*, Dewey Livingston pages 192-193
Interviews with Dave Pekonen & Fire Chief Paul Smith



2 1/2 " x 3 1/2 " Kent Market Calendar Kentfield Fire Department decorated for Christmas Party 1940's (photos courtesy Kent Fire District)

At Christmastime in Greenbrae Beth Ashley column 1990's

A WOMAN in line at Longs confided that she was having a hard time getting into the Christmas spirit. 'The world's in too much of a mess.' I agreed with her, heavy-heartedly. But when I emptied my basket for checkout, it was full of wrapping paper, red ribbon and paper goods for our traditional Christmas Eve party. Somehow, we do carry on.

My Christmas list, as usual, is distressingly long - gifts for five sons and their wives, nine grandchildren, two greats, and a raft of nieces, nephews and friends. When I know what a person wants - or needs - I am delighted to buy it. When I am just buying to fulfill an obligation, I cringe.

'Most of us have more things than we can possibly use,' said the lady at Longs.

I know we live in a world padded with goodies - ever-more-scrumptious clothing, ever-more-luscious food and wine, ever-more-amazing techno-toys. Such things are signs of human evolution, the amazing progression from cave-dwelling to luxury lifestyle. Far be it for me to pooh-pooh such miracles, though sometimes I wonder just where they will stop. How many more refinements do we need?

Part of my motivation is the old one - wanting to delight my loved ones with welcome surprises. Another part is the wish to adhere to old ways. Good or bad, our Christmas tradition has always been excess: lots of gifts, lots of food, lots of mob-scene get-togethers. The goal: that everyone feel safe, cosseted, loved. A third is to make a statement - that however dark the world seems to be, we will light our own personal candle. We will not allow despair.

How easy it would be, at this juncture in history, to feel swamped by the daily news: drive-by shootings in the East Bay, endless savagery in the Middle East, famine and civil wars all over the globe, hideous murders everywhere.

And yet, and yet. Around us are so many warm-hearted people, trying so hard to do good. We have beleaguered friends who have carried on bravely and kids who, despite the temptations, have turned out OK. There is much to be glad for. Christmas was intended as a time of hope, when all the world's ugliness is suddenly redeemed.

So we honor its intention as bet we can, trimming the tree, wrapping

the gifts, ignoring world disaster and rank commercialism. We go to the parties. We hug those we love. We try to justify our good fortune while knowing guiltily the hardships of so many others. We succumb to the merriment. After all, it is a wonderful life.

Christmas. It's a season I dread every year. Deep down, it's a season I truly love.

Get Involved!

We have many plans for this school year and would like to include you in them. We are establishing several working committees. If you are interested, please contact us!

- Events Committee: helping to organize and publicize member and community events such as the Painters of Mt. Tamalpais and the May Day Celebration.
- Research Committee: collecting more oral histories and generating the historical background of sites in the Kentfield and Greenbrae area...developing curriculum, creating walking tours...
- Membership & Outreach Committee: reaching out to local businesses and alumni to expand our membership

If you would like to be on one of the above committees, please send a message through info@kghs.org and we will get back to you.

Kentfield Greenbrae Historical Society
P.O. Box 236
Kentfield, CA 94914

Happy Holidays!

The Kentfield-Greenbrae Historical Society wishes all of you a very happy holiday season...We are thankful for our family, friends, and community. May Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa and other special celebrations renew our faith in a world of peace.

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