

# Kentfield Greenbrae Historical Society

## Historian

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### President's Message

A little over a month ago, I had the opportunity to tour our newly renovated Kent Middle School. Improvements had been made throughout the campus: the front office and staff lounge reflected the importance of a well-designed work space for all educators; the science rooms demonstrated the link between academics and environment; the wood shop improvements showed the students that not only is it important for them to master skills which could serve them a lifetime, but also it is important to their teachers, to their community that they have a safe, healthy space in which to learn.

What impressed me most, however, was the new music room, but not for the reason that you might suspect. Don't get me wrong: it is an amazing room, complete with space, instruments and a wonderful high ceiling. It's something special! What I left with, though, was the affirmation that, even as the Kentfield schools continue to rank high by most all academic markers, the whole child is valued, encouraged and challenged. Students are encouraged to explore musicianship and artistry of all sorts and are shown that their efforts are supported by the schools and by their communities.

After reflecting on my recent visit to Kent, then reviewing this issue's focus on community schools of the past, I was struck by that old adage: the more things change, the more they remain the same. The citizens who opened the Ross Landing School in 1866 strove to establish "a tradition of high quality education." Our current-day communities work towards the same goal: whether it's chalk or computers, residents of Kentfield and Greenbrae have prioritized the education of our children, preparing them to step into their future.

Wishing all of you a season of celebration and joy,

Susan Morrow  
Co-president 2018-2019

### We Need Help...

**NEW:** We are looking for someone to work with us who has budget and financial experience ... a volunteer (2-4 hrs per month) or someone to act as our Treasurer and become a KGHS Board member. Please contact us at [info@kghs.org](mailto:info@kghs.org) if you are interested or know someone who might be!

Pop Up Store Open  
December 6 from  
5-7 pm

## KGHS Pop Up Store OPEN

SIP, SHOP & STROLL

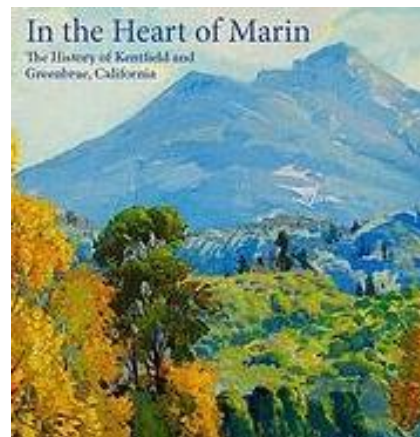
Holiday Mixer

Thursday, December 6th

5-7pm

Bon Air shops and restaurants and the Larkspur Chamber of Commerce welcome the community to a festive holiday stroll and free evening of bubbles, small bites, trunk shows, shopping fun and Dickensian-dressed carolers. Merchants will offer demos, holiday gift ideas, stocking stuffers and sidewalk specials along, brightly lit promenade beautifully decorated for the season.

**KGHS will have Books, cards and other merchandise for sale... Great Holiday Gifts!**



## The Schools of Kentfield and Greenbrae

*(Excerpts from In the Heart of Marin: A History of Kentfield and Greenbrae by Dewey Livingston pages 296-378)*

A community's core is its school, and Kentfield is no exception. When the cornerstone for what would be named Adaline E Kent School was laid in 1914, the event marked the advancement of the community from a waterfront hamlet of negligible reputation to a proud American village. The lower Ross Valley advanced from an old fashioned one-room schoolhouse to a fine and modern edifice dedicated to the best elementary education possible. Since then, Kentfield and Greenbrae schools have provided just that, and even more.

Striving for excellence has been the bylaw of schooling in the community for 150 years. The opening of rustic Ross Landing School in 1866 started a tradition of high-quality education, followed by a modern school in 1915. Incremental improvements continued including construction of two entirely new schools, and an extraordinary push starting in the 1950's and culmination in the '80s and '90s made Kentfield schools among the best in the nation. It was no accident; the support of community members, staff and leadership, not to mention the talents and hard work of the students, led Kentfield and Greenbrae's almost intense desirability as a place to raise children.

### **Ross Landing School** (pages 297-303)

Prior to 1866, the children of Ross Landing were educated, if at all, at the crowded schoolhouse in San Rafael, no easy feat with poor roads and sparse settlements...Increasing population soon demanded a local school house... The community leaders petitioned for, and successfully created, a new Ross Landing School District... The school was, like others in the county, funded by local and state tax money and calculated on school-age population in the district. In 1874, the local tax apportionment was \$15 per child, resulting in \$735 for 49 children; the apportionment from the state fund was \$2.23 per census child, resulting in \$98.35 for school and \$10.92 for the school's library! Ross Landing School served children of Ross Valley until 1915 when AE Kent opened.



*Ross Landing School served Kentfield from 1866-1914. It was located between Stetson and Terrace Avenues on the north side of what is now Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. (KSD)*

Adaline E Kent paid special attention to the local school and offered her support in many ways...At the beginning of the fall of 1912, 73 pupils crowded Ross Landing School...The Marin County Board of Supervisors approved a name change from Ross Landing School District to Kentfield School District... After several unsuccessful bond elections, and arguments about where the school should be built, the bonds were finally approved in May of 1914 to build a school building on the "Stadium site" offered by William Kent... Kentfield held a dance at the stadium to celebrate the vote. Almost every person in Kentfield attended." *Marin IJ* May 11, 1914 would become a historic day in Kentfield and marks the start of the creation of Adaline E. Kent School.

### **AE Kent School** (pages 303-317)

"The dedication services of the new school at Kentfield were held Tuesday (April 16) evening at eight p.m. The school is an up to date modern structure, with a red tile roof and white cemented sides. The rooms are practically open air having exceptionally large windows." *San Anselmo Herald* The school was officially named Adaline E Kent School in honor of the longtime supporter of schools and culture in Kentfield; Mrs. Kent had died only the month before. The new schoolhouse was a source of great pride to the residents, students and educators in Kentfield and would serve the families of Kentfield for almost 40 years... Designed to accommodate grades one through eight, there were only

four classrooms, each with a cloakroom...The school grounds, built on marshland that had been partially filled to serve the Tamalpais Centre, were graded and further filled to make way for enlarged playing fields and attractive landscaping...To the north, stood Richard Diener's bulb and seed growing grounds. In 1922 the local newspaper noted, "The Kentfield School is opposite Mr. Diener's famous gladioli farm and the children looking out of the windows can gaze upon thousands and thousands of bulbous plants in bloom." Later this property would be added to the school for additional classrooms and recreational facilities. It is where the main office, library, multipurpose room and gym are located today



*Adaline E Kent School in the 1930's (Bob Hough col)*



*Kent campus in the 1950's (KSD)*

### **Greenbrae Elementary School** (pages 317-320)

The 1950's showed tremendous growth in population and school enrollment...The original 40-year-old Adaline E Kent School building was torn down around 1954, a victim of modern state earthquake standards. The new classrooms formed a courtyard that faced College Avenue, and, as time went on, auxiliary buildings were added. The big news of the early decade was the construction and opening of Greenbrae School, which would cater to first through fifth grades. Greenbrae developer Niels Schultz donated the pretty 7 ½ acres east of Eliseo drive for an elementary school, keeping his promise to create a well-rounded community. Classes commenced at Greenbrae in 1951, and, by the end of the 1951-1952 session, there were 151 students in grades 1-5...As soon as the school opened, talks began about adding for more classrooms.



*New Greenbrae School 1951 (KSD)*



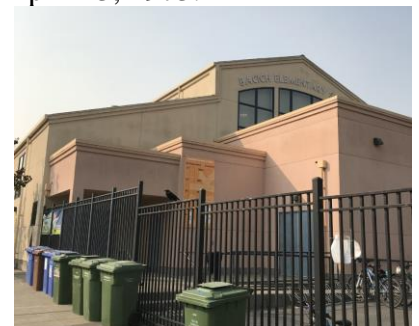
*Greenbrae School Park (Richard Torney Col)*

With all the good memories of school days in Greenbrae, the story has a sad ending... The 1984 enrollment had dropped from a high of about 1500 to 583, with Greenbrae dropping to under 200... Despite months of protests... the decision was to close Greenbrae and consolidate Bacich K-5 and grades 6-8 at Kent. The last classes met at Greenbrae in the spring of 1981 and then the school closed...An agreement was made to annex the site to Larkspur and sell the land for development and a 1.5-acre public park, now called the Greenbrae School Park.

### **Wolfe Grade School, now Bacich** (pages 323-324; 320-333)

Even as the new Greenbrae School opened and buildings were being constructed at Kent, the exploding local population would need even more schoolrooms and teachers...It was decided that a new school should be built at a site halfway between Greenbrae and Kentfield schools. For a short time the property purchased at the foot of Wolfe Grade was pegged for a shopping center. Wolfe Grade School opened on November 16, 1959, with 175 K-5 pupils, six teachers and a principal shared with Greenbrae School.

In 1966, trustees hired Tony Bacich as superintendent of the Kentfield School District... Under Bacich the curriculum advanced to new heights...new innovations in teaching, the creation of multimedia centers and the use of computers in the classrooms, multi age programs, drug and sex education, expansion of the art and music programs... were all part of the '60s... While attending a difficult board meeting on September 2, 1972, Bacich suffered a heart attack and died within minutes...The Kentfield Board of Trustees voted to rename Wolfe Grade School as the Anthony G. Bacich School, which was so dedicated on April 23, 1973.



*Bacich School today.*



**Bacich and AEKent** schools have continued to be outstanding Distinguished Schools, meeting the needs of their students. The community has supported them through the passage of parcel taxes which have kept the schools relevant and cutting edge, preparing students to thrive in the future. Recent modernizations have been completed at Kent and are taking place now at Bacich. Thank you for making the Kentfield School District so amazing!



*New Kent front office and state of the art music room. (KGHS Board photos)*

## Time to Renew!

Renewal notices have just been sent out to those whose membership is coming due December 31, 2018, as well as to those of you whose memberships have recently expired. We rely on your continued support to continue our work supporting the Kentfield and Greenbrae communities. We have added the \$25 membership option for local Non-Profits, ensuring that you will get our newsletter and updates about the 2019 Community Heritage and History Day on May 4.

DO IT [ONLINE](#) NOW before you forget!

- \$20 - Students & Seniors
- **\$25- Non Profit organizations NEW**
- \$30 - Individuals & Families
- \$50 - Business Membership
- \$100 -Patron
- \$250 -Benefactor \*
- \$500 -Historian \*
- \$500- Business Partner\*
- \$1000 + Lifetime Membership\*
- \$1000+ Lifetime Business Partner \*

Or you can send a check:

**KGHS Membership  
Box 236  
Kentfield, CA 94914.**

Please include your name, level of membership, address, e-mail and phone number. If you use a credit card number, please include your CVV code. Included with your membership is the quarterly newsletter and special invitations to member events.

## Bacich Third Graders Learn about Local History

Every December, KGHS Board members Marilee Rogers and Lorelei Evans are invited into the Bacich Third Grade classes to present the "Then and Now" slide show of Kentfield and Greenbrae. The students are fascinated by the stories of growing up in this community many years ago and the photos of bygone eras. They get especially enthusiastic when they recognize a familiar site. This presentation is the introductory piece of their Marin History project . Students will then research various communities, landmarks and institutions that make Marin so special. Their finished project boards will be on display in our Pop Up store and at the Community Heritage and History Day on May 4, 2019.



*Bon Air Center 1952 (Greenbrae Management Company)*



*Bon Air Center 2016 (Marilee Rogers)*

## Board of Directors

Susan Morrow, Lorelei Evans, Sarah Fletcher, Mary Gilardi, Julie Gondak, Ross McKenna, Sydney Park, Marilee Rogers, Heather McPhail Sridharan, Richard Torney, Marlies Zeisler

Author: Dewey Livingston