

President's Message

Our communities had some concerning local issues with which they needed to deal. Consciousness needed to be raised as did monies to finance viable solutions. A small core met, came up with a plan and then the movement grew. The core members of the group asked their friends and neighbors to lend a hand and, soon enough, what had been born of the concerns of one or two individuals had grown to a community-wide movement to improve the quality of life in the Kentfield and Greenbrae communities.

You might be trying to “fill-in-the blank”: am I talking about the formation of the Kentfield Schools Foundation or maybe groups recently created to address flood control, traffic issues or fire safety? None of the above! While each of those issues have inspired the local citizenry to organize, to make their voice heard, in the early 1900s, Adaline Kent became aware of local miscreant youth and resulting vandalism. Her solution wasn't heavy-handed discipline but rather an extensive plan to offer all sorts of avenues to wholesome activities via the Tamalpais

Centre. While the Centre itself no longer exists, its legacy and model of civic responsibility and activism resound in the actions and attitudes of current day local residents.

As the KGHS works to prepare for the May 4 Community Heritage and History Day, I am reminded that the priority of caring for our neighbors and moving forward with compassion and purpose is truly what makes living in the “heart of Marin” so very special!

Susan Morrow, Co-president 2018-2019

KGHS Spring Activities...

KGHS & Bon Air
Community Heritage and History Day
Saturday, MAY 4, 2019
11am - 2 pm
Bon Air Center
Join us!

Community Heritage and History Day Plans...

Please support your community and join us on Saturday, May 4th. Over 40 community groups will be sharing information and activities. Some of the groups include:

- Children's hands-on activities in Kid's Maker Tent
- Fun Passport Game with prizes of a Gotts soft serve cone or SusieCakes cupcake
- Student work from Bacich and Kent Middle School
- Outdoor Community Hall with tables from over 40 local organizations
- Kentfield Fire Department Vintage fire truck on display
- Pet adoption
- Pacifics Baseball Team
- Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM)
- SMART Train ... and many more!

Tentative Schedule of Activities:

11:00 AM

- Kent Student Jazz Band in front of Gott's
- Visions of Marin: George Demont Otis, American Impressionist video

11:30

- Kent Student Choir in front of Gott's

12:00 PM

- Redwood Jazz Combo in front of Gott's
- Kentfield-Greenbrae Historical Society slideshow and narration by Richard Torney

1:00

- College of Marin Chamber Singers in front of Gott's
- Marin Nostalgia Historical Slide Show by Jason Lewis

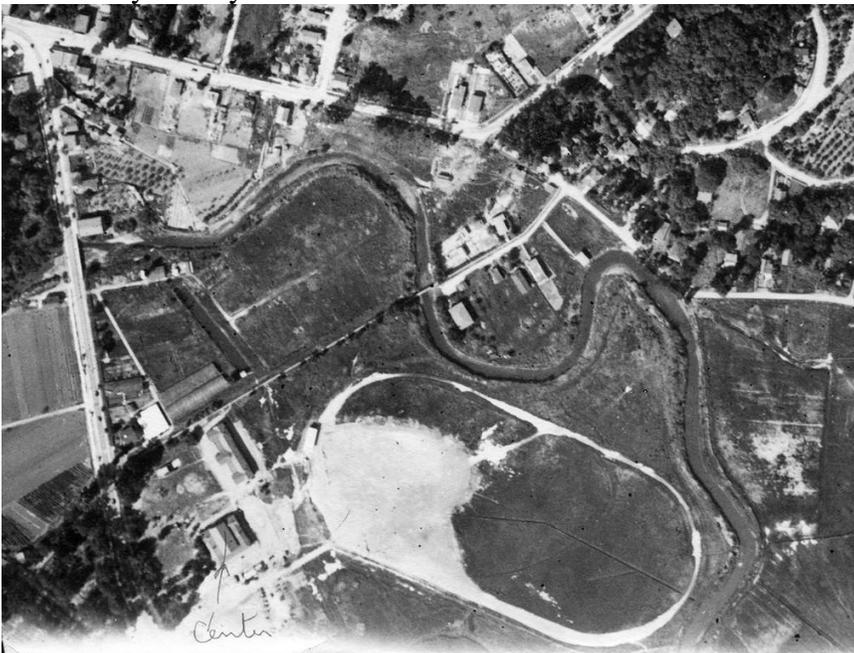
More details will be sent out later this month.

The Kent family: a history of community involvement

Excerpts from In the Heart of Marin: A History of Kentfield and Greenbrae by Dewey Livingston pages 104-119

Adaline Kent continued her good civic deeds after the death of her husband...As of 1905, the community that was now called Kentfield (a post office was established that year) had a number of problems. A distinct town but ruled by a somewhat distant county government as a "district," the place experienced more than its share of petty crime and social problems. Old Ross Landing was a bit worn out. Saloons proliferated and the summer resorts could become rowdy. And, in the aftermath of the earthquake of 1906, the population of Kentfield and its surrounding towns started to boom. In 1908, spurred by recent vandalism to the Kentfield post office and railroad depot by "unruly boys," William Kent and his mother conferred and decided that the best solution would not be so much punishment but rather "wholesome leadership."

The Kents had been inspired by the Abraham Lincoln Centre in Chicago... and also a rural playgrounds movement, following the belief that through healthy pursuits both physical and mental, young people and adults could be averted from lowly endeavors. ...The Kents and their friends organized a 50-member executive committee to create the Marin Stadium Association, holding meetings in Marin towns and a fundraiser on the Kent estate. The new association gathered 121 charter members, most of whom were prominent Marin people, with the goal to build a large clubhouse and well-organized grounds for recreation. The place and its governing body (all men as officers, with a women's auxiliary, both first headed by Mr. and Mrs. William Kent, respectively) would be called Tamalpais Centre, but it would be more than a modern community facility.



Outline of the Kentfield Speedway remained in this 1920's aerial photograph, Tamalpais Centre and Kent School are directly west (left) of the track, with Sir Francis Drake Blvd. at the top.

(Anne T. Kent California Room, MCFL)

Called "A New Social Experiment," the trustees stated their goals: "Tamalpais Centre ... has been established to meet the social needs of our time and place. It must be a centre of neighborliness wherein all of us working together may more fully enjoy the life granted each of us. It is destined to mean opportunity for rest, recreation and instruction for men, women and children."

...The Kent family owned the marshy flats that stretched from the county road to the creek, directly east of the train depot. This land saw little use, and so Mrs. Kent donated 29 acres to the association for its use as a civic park for recreation, meetings, entertainment, and general public use...

...Before the clubhouse was completed, the association opened the grounds with a program on May Day, 1909, in which Mrs. A. E. Kent performed a ceremonial groundbreaking. The day-long program featured foot races and track events (mostly for men and boys), special amusing events like a greased pig race and fat men's and women's races, a maypole dance with the crowning of a May Queen, and "literary exercises."

...The annual May Day festival became a staple of Marin County culture. For many years, thousands of children from all over the county danced around the maypole at Tamalpais Centre, before the tradition was moved to Kent School. Schools around the county celebrated May Day, but the Kentfield event was the mother of them all, at least in Marin...While the

maypole dance was a highlight, the day also consisted of running races, track events, and other entertainments. The participating children came from local grammar and high schools. Members of the Woman's Club took charge of the concessions including sandwiches, ice cream, lemonade and peanuts, which raised funds for the Centre.



*Inaugural May Day Festival at Tamalpais Centre on May 1, 1909.
(Anne T. Kent California Room, MCFL)*

...The second "May Day Fete" at Tamalpais Centre in 1910 was highly publicized and a great success; almost 100 volunteer adults managed the fete, and an estimated 6,000 people attended. The Northwestern Pacific ran special trains to what was ballyhooed as "One of the Greatest Affairs in History of the County," with seventy five events including bands, races, the maypole dance, and more balloon ascensions. Admission was free. Children participated from Kentfield, Larkspur, Ross, San Anselmo, San Rafael, Sausalito, Mill Valley and points beyond.

The May Day festivals were held at the Tamalpais Centre on and off until 1926 or 1927. Teachers at Adaline E. Kent School took up the tradition, and for decades the maypole dances continued on that campus...

..Despite the popularity of the larger traditional events, overall the Tamalpais Centre did not thrive...Less than two years after the dedication of the building, the Kentfield Civic Association in 1911 announced that it was in negotiations with Tamalpais Centre to transfer the property to the Kentfield School District, with the intent of establishing a high school there that would serve the entire Ross Valley from Fairfax to Corte Madera. ...There was opposition, one local lady explaining that she and her friends did not want a school built on a marsh, but rather on land adjacent to the present school, which was situated on a hillside overlooking Kentfield. The bond issue did not pass, and so the Tamalpais Centre directors retained the property and plugged on. May Day celebrations continued but the Centre lay in the doldrums...Five years after the Tamalpais Centre opened, on July 7, 1914, 2.34 acres in the northwestern section of the Centre's land was

sold for \$1,000 to the school district for a new schoolhouse, which was built and opened in 1915 and named Adaline E. Kent.

...If the Tamalpais Centre didn't take off, it's auxiliary Woman's Club did, building its own clubhouse (smaller, of course, than the massive Tamalpais Centre) and enjoying an 80-year life as a center of women's activities in the Ross Valley. nestled between the big old clubhouse and the Adaline E. Kent School, which had moved into its new quarters in 1915. Tamalpais Centre deeded the parcel to the Woman's Club on June 7, 1929, marking the end of that well-meaning public institution. ..After raising \$8,500-much of it provided by Elizabeth Kent-the club members built a cozy clubhouse with high ceilings and a fine stone fireplace inscribed with a dedication to Adaline E. Kent; the exterior was reminiscent of the Spanish style of neighboring buildings, in keeping with the original wishes of Mrs. Kent. ...In 1988, as the membership dwindled from the hundreds to 23, the club looked at selling the building at 800 College Avenue ...and was sold in September 1988 to the California State Parks Foundation...When the foundation left the area in 2007, the Kentfield School District bought the property for \$1.8 million, which now houses the district administration. ...The Kents hosted a longstanding Marin County tradition for 43 years: the annual Grape Festival. First held in 1899 at Fairhills, a San Rafael estate, the event raised funds for the Presbyterian

Orphanage and Farm in San Anselmo, a pet project of Adaline Kent. ...The event moved to the Kent estate in 1903... Children, both from the orphanage and local communities, enjoyed rides in decorated pony carts...

...Following Adaline Kent's death in 1914, her daughter-in-law Elizabeth Thacher Kent continued the tradition. In the 1930s, the orphanage became known as Sunny Hills, and later the event was called the Sunny Hills Grape Festival. The Grape Festival moved to the Marin Art & Garden Center in 1947, to the Sunny Hills facility in San Anselmo two years later, and then to the county's civic center fairgrounds and local shopping malls. The Grape Festival's long tradition came to a close in 2006, the organizers citing the lack of volunteers and sponsorships... The former orphanage, founded in 1895, is known today as Sunny Hills Services.

Get involved!

We are always looking for more community members to become involved. If you are interested, please contact us!

- Events Committee: helping to organize and publicize member and community events
- Research Committee: collecting more oral histories and generating the historical background of sites in the Kentfield and Greenbrae area...developing curriculum for third grade students, 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.

Local Historical Societies and Museums...

Many of the local museums and historical societies will be participating in our Community Heritage and History day on May 4. This link on our KGHS website will connect you with almost all of the Historical Societies and Museums in Marin. Most have websites, some have actual museums, and others have posted activities. We will continue to feature different groups in the coming year.

[List of Marin Historical Societies and Museums](#)

Board of Directors

Susan Morrow, Lorelei Evans, Sarah Fletcher, Mary Gilardi, Julie Gondak, Tamara Hull Arnold, Ross McKenna, Sydney Park, Marilee Rogers, Heather McPhail Sridharan, Richard Torney, Author: Dewey Livingston

Time to Renew!

Renewal notices will be sent out in May to those whose membership is coming due June 30, 2019, 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.