

Kentfield Greenbrae Historical Society Historian

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www.kghs.org

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President's Message

This rain has kept us indoors for much too long but our reservoirs are full, nature is in full bloom and our beautiful hills are a lush green. Yes, we've been quiet since the beginning of the year, but we have been busy! We are so excited about introducing you to KGHS 2.0... a new and upgraded website, a contemporary new logo and a new focus for our future plans to make KGHS more accessible to the community. Andrea Schultz and the Greenbrae Management Company have been most generous providing us with a space in the Bon Air Center. Now it's time for you to visit us!

You will soon be receiving a personal invitation to join us as we continue to preserve the heritage of our special community and expand our collection of artifacts, photos and letters for future generations. We want you to be more involved as well. Join us at the Community Celebration on Saturday May 20 and learn more about what we are doing. Consider becoming a docent!

Marilee Rogers
Co-president, 2022-2023



Kentfield Greenbrae
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bon Air Community Spring Fair



JOIN
KGHS AND BON AIR
CENTER

MAY 20, 2023

11AM TO 2 PM

A Partial List of Community Groups

Central Marin Fire
Kentfield Fire Protection District
Central Marin Police Authority
Golden Gate Transit and Ferry
California Highway Patrol
Marin History Museum
Marin Health Medical Center
Marin Rose Society
Chronos Academy
College of Marin
Marin County Elections / Registrar of Voters
Marin County Parks
County of Marin with Supervisors Katie Rice
State Assemblymember Damon Connolly
Marin Women's Political Action Committee (MWPAC)
Camp Galileo
Redwood High School Alumni
Kentfield Schools Foundation (kik)
Marin Enrichment Preschool
Kent Woodlands Property Association
Greenbrae Property Owners Assn.
Coast Miwok of Marin
Anne T. Kent California Room, Marin County Free Library
Kentfield-Greenbrae Historical Society (KGHS)
San Anselmo Historical Society
Larkspur Library and Recreation
Larkspur Chamber of Commerce

Ross Landing 1871

Joseph Lee

Taking advantage of an unprecedented opportunity to expand our collection, KGHS has recently acquired noted nineteenth century artist Joseph Lee's 1871 depiction of what was Ross Landing, and is now Kentfield. The painting is a rare and important view of central Marin County detailed with incredible accuracy.



The newly-acquired painting by noted nineteenth century artist Joseph Lee is a rare and important view of central Marin County made during a period when photography was still in its infancy. A painter typically takes some liberties in depicting a scene like this, but here Lee detailed the village of Ross Landing—what would become Kentfield in 1905—and its surrounding landscape with incredible accuracy. Ross Landing was the only town in the vicinity at that time: no Larkspur, Corte Madera or Greenbrae. It was a busy shipping port yet to be influenced by the coming railroad.

The painting provides us with a clear view from 150 years ago, a scene so vivid that one can almost walk down the dusty street and visit with the Smiths at their pioneer store, and walk over to the pristine valley that would soon become the Kent Estate under looming Mt. Tamalpais. Lee's artistry reveals not only a great talent but also a finely honed skill at depicting a place and point in time in a way that draws the viewer into the life and feeling of the scene. The painting is of great value to residents, historians and naturalists, and contributes to a California-wide base of knowledge and appreciation.

Ross Landing... A Little History

Excerpts from *In the Heart of Marin: A History of Kentfield and Greenbrae* by Dewey Livingston

(Early Settlement of Lower Ross Valley p. 10-19)

The Ross Valley and San Quentin Peninsula were ideal locations...A man named, curiously, Juan Bautista Rogers Cooper obtained the land as a grant from the Mexican Government in 1840 and so began the transition of this property from wild to tame. The land passed through several owners including Theodor Cordua and Benjamin Rush Buckelew, before being acquired by San Francisco merchant James Ross. The transaction included the saw mill with its machinery and tools, raw materials, large lathes, a blacksmith shop, a scow schooner called *Safety* and a sloop called *Westwind* and other boats...

The Rosses moved into Buckelew's two-story house up the valley. Being respectable and wealthy, they worked to turn the raw and partially logged landscape into a fine country estate, planting trees... and gardens while continuing the logging operations as his predecessors had done.... Ross made use of the head of navigation on Corte Madera Creek, less than a mile downstream from his house, as a shipping point. The location had been referred to as the embarcadero, one of many that were found along the creek

downstream to the bay. This little landing would be the seed out of which grew Kentfield. ... His embarcadero became the nucleus of a new and important town in early Marin County, which would grow into an influential center of country life. Ross Landing became Kentfield, and his son's dairy ranch Greenbrae.



Ross Landing in 1873, from a stereophotograph taken by Eadweard Muybridge. Peter Smith's merchantile and warehouse are seen at the right, with the San Anselmo Valley and Bald Hill in the distance. (Newall Snyder Collection) p20

(Ross Landing's Rough-and-Tumble Origins p20-35)

Around the time of Ross's death at the end of 1862, however, the rag-tag settlement at the bend in the creek began to boom, with new roads leading to it from several directions and a creek-based shipping trade of a proportion that would cause disbelief in current residents. Ships of ten to fifty tons burden called at the landing, carefully following tides as they navigated the serpentine slough from San Francisco Bay. Stores, saloons, hotels and boarding houses, and a fine schoolhouse would provide the foundation of what we know today as Kentfield....

With the election precinct called "Ross" *Embarcadero*, some residents took it upon themselves to attach a Gold Rush style name: Tarantulaville. Although tarantulas were known in the area, this name no doubt originated in the saloon: inferior whisky was called "tarantula juice" in those days. ...

In 1862... The county Board of Supervisors built a bridge over Corte Madera Creek adjacent to the landing (near today's College Avenue bridge), making travel between Sausalito and San Rafael more convenient... "It was not an uncommon sight to see twenty five scows loading lumber, tan bark, cord wood and hides at one time," claimed pioneer Charles Lauff many years later... Commerce at Ross Landing included shipments from James Ross's sawmill at Rancho Nicasio... paper products from Samuel Taylor's Pioneer Paper Mill in San Geronimo Valley, wood products from other mills, butter from the burgeoning dairy industry...

Of course Ross Landing also was the main place that goods from San Francisco came to Marin County, including machinery, tools, bulk foodstuffs and liquor.... The importance of the landing was definitely slipping by 1870. ... Life went on despite the decline of the port. The census of 1870 showed close to 80 residents of the lower valley ... More people moved into the area the following decade, and it was discovered by the wealthy San Francisco set by the 1880s. (Adaline Kent took a buggy ride from her rented home in San Rafael over the south ridge and, as the Ross Valley vista unfolding below with Mt. Tamalpais as the backdrop, she proclaimed what she saw to be "a vision of paradise"... and the rest is our history!

KGHS in transition...

As we move into 2023, our organization has a strong foundation and is ready to evolve into KGHS 2.0! Realizing that our communities rely on KGHS to explore and highlight our history, the KGHS focus is shifting to insuring preservation of the artifacts and records which we have both acquired and of which we have been made aware. In addition to preserving those items that are already in our collection, KGHS is seeking to judiciously expand our collection, creating a carefully curated and archived collection, thus creating a community legacy in the years to come. Please consider supporting KGHS in its efforts to preserve the history of our communities.

It is important to note that membership fees and, especially, donations are the sole source of support for KGHS. Unlike other historical societies throughout Marin, there is no governmental support as neither Kentfield nor Greenbrae are incorporated entities.

Just as our communities rely on us, the Kentfield Greenbrae Historical Society, to preserve, explore and promote our history, we rely on our community members, both individuals and businesses, to support the KGHS as we move forward. Please consider a generous donation.

Visit our NEWLY UPDATED website
[www.kghs.org!](http://www.kghs.org)

DONATE or JOIN NOW before you forget!

\$25 - Students & Seniors, Non-Profit organizations

\$35 - Individuals & Families

\$50 - Sponsor

\$100 - Patron

Donations of any amount are always welcome!

Or you can send a check:

KGHS

Box 236, Kentfield, CA 94914.

Please include your name, level of membership, address, email, and phone number. If you use a credit card number, please include your CVV code and zip code

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;
 - **Volunteer at our Pop Up Store & Gallery**
 - **Be trained to make presentations locally**

- 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.

KGHS Board of Directors

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Marilee Rogers, Co-President,
Heather McPhail Sridharan,
Co-President,
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board member Bitsa Freeman.
Dewey Livingston, Author



Kentfield Greenbrae
HISTORICAL SOCIETY