

Kentfield Greenbrae Historical Society Historian

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President's Message

Arks and antecedents are just a couple of the things the Kentfield-Greenbrae Historical Society is highlighting as we move into the Spring of 2018. This issue of *The Historian* explores one of Greenbrae's often unsung communities: the Greenbrae Boardwalk, complete with homes on stilts, the former Greenbrae Rod and Gun Club/Crossley Bridge Center and the arks once bordering Corte Madera Creek. The Hermann sisters share their experiences living on the creek and some of the unique, but generally unexplored, chapters of Greenbrae's role in our communities.

On May 5, the KGHS will be celebrating Community Heritage and History Day, featuring both a look at our community's history and, via over 30 community agencies and groups, what's happening in this corner of the county right now! We are delighted to partner with the Bon Air Center in producing this event and are very grateful to them for acting as hosts as we come together to learn, share and get to know our neighbors.

Join us in celebrating our communities; savor the past and explore the present!

Susan Morrow
Co-President, 2017-18

Community Heritage and History Day May 5

KGHS and the Bon Air Center are partnering to bring you a

Community Heritage & History Day

Saturday, May 5 from 11AM - 2 PM

Bon Air Center

Join the fun and see what community groups are doing to make Kentfield and Greenbrae the best place to live!
Over 30 Local Community Groups will be represented
Food trucks and box lunches will be available
Music from Kent Jazz Band, RHS Jazz combo and local Mariachis
Student projects from Bacich and Kent Middle School
Activities for children
Historical slide show, George Demont Otis video
and much, much more!

Marin History Museum Updates Pop Up Store...

The Marin History Museum has generously loaned historical artifacts for display in our Pop Up Store at Bon Air Center. Be sure to check out the window and visit us on May 5! They will be on loan through October 2018.



College of Marin banner, beanie and yearbook; Kent Banner and early primers and textbooks



Two children's school desks with inkwells ... one from the 1800's and one from the 1900's.

Some of the community groups participating...

Kentfield Fire Department...
Kentfield School District... KIK...
Friends of Corte Madera Creek...
Marin General Hospital...
Smart Train...
Marin History Museum...
San Quentin Museum...
Marin Fire History Project...
County Sheriff... TAM...
Larkspur Library... Larkspur
Heritage Preservation Board...
Office of Mark Levine ...
Office of Gavin Newsom...

Greenbrae Boardwalk

... Sydney Park

Mention the community of Greenbrae and certain images pop up: carefully tended homes dotting the hills, connected via winding tree-lined streets; the multifamily apartments and condominiums perched on the hills between Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and Corte Madera Creek; or, maybe, Bon Air Center comes to mind. There is more to Greenbrae, though, than meets the mind's eye!

The Greenbrae boardwalk, which borders the Corte Madera Creek on the east side of Highway 101, is a unique, often unknown Marin neighborhood. Forty-nine homes sit on pilings over the salt-water marsh. While most of the dwellings are on the creek side of the wooden walkway that lends its name to the tiny community, there are a few homes on the south side of the boardwalk with lots extending to the creek. Most of the all of the homes have either a dock or floats used for mooring their boats.



Greenbrae Boardwalk Mailboxes (Sterley Real Estate Team)

In the early 1900s, the boardwalk “was a series of 12’ x 2’ boards extending across the pickleweed - a favorite spot for catching bass, duck hunting, and carousing.” (Hidden Ecologies, 2006, <http://arch.ced.berkeley.edu/hiddenecologies>, accessed 3/2018.) During the 1910s, three homes were built along the walkway, with utilities very gradually following: a waterline (1921); electricity (1946); postal delivery (1948) and sewage installation (1961). Additionally, the community has their own fire fighting equipment, including hydrants and hoses.

Most of the current homes, some around 100 years old, have wood siding. Some of the newer residences have metal siding. All of the residents use wagons and carts to transport groceries and other necessities to their home. Bicycles are a common sight on the walkway as are a number of canine residents!

So next time you take the SFD exit off of 101, steal an eastward glance and take in yet another slice of Greenbrae's past and present.

Greenbrae Rod & Gun Club/Crossley Bridge Center...

Oral History with Bob Crossley
by Julie Gondak

The Crossley Bridge Center / Club house at 18 Greenbrae Boardwalk was initially the full time Clubhouse and HQ of the Green Brae Rod & Gun Club. The club building was built sometime in the early half of the 1900's. It sits on the west side of Corte Madera Creek, nestled between the 101 overpass and the old Northwestern Pacific Railroad trestle & drawbridge. (2015 YouTube video of area: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1dSve32uDI>)

Many of its founding members were previously known as the "The Fifty-Fifty Club" which was an association of creek-side dwelling working men who loved hunting, fishing, habitat preservation and congenial gatherings.



"50/50" members purportedly lived on both sides of the creek before the current 101 overpass replaced Peterson Bridge and eliminated the last homes on the creeks N/E bank. Aka 50/50. (Courtesy Bob Crossley)

In the early days, everyone fished and hunted and The Rod & Gun Club had a fairly large, local, proprietary membership. It was formally incorporated in August 1934 as Member #4 in the organization of the Associated Sportsmen of Calif

Inc. The Rod & Gun operated as a gathering spot for local sportsmen, their families and friends. Many members would show up at the club on Fridays at the end of the work week. It was a fun spot in its heyday and there were often large, festive gatherings with 300 plus people for a Holiday or event. One popular regular event was their fish fry feast where club members could catch the fish of the day right off the dock, bag ducks on the bay, gather clams on the gravelly shores by San Quentin and then cook it all up in the club kitchen for the feast and festivities that followed.



Military Members with a big string of stripers. (Courtesy of Bob Crossley)

This went on for a several decades until 1960's when the club's membership began to dwindle. Finally, in 1971 the Rod & Gun ceased operation and began a new era as the Crossley (family) Bridge Club.

When Lura Crossley took over the Clubhouse the focus became Bridge (the game), but also good times. Since 1971 the Crossley's operated the Club primarily as a Bridge Center. Lura and her kids Dave, Bob, Bill and Janet all taught Bridge and the Club hosted classes and Bridge tournaments at all levels which often attracted international Bridge celebrities. The Crossley family also regularly taught on bridge Cruises and hosted holiday Bridge Parties where large friendly groups of bridge players would have cocktails and dinner, then play bridge late into the night. There was always something going on at the Club. Bob and sister Janet Crossley closed the Crossley Bridge Center in Feb. 2018. The Green Brae Rod & Gun / Crossley Bridge Center Club house and surrounding property are currently for sale and awaiting the next evolution.



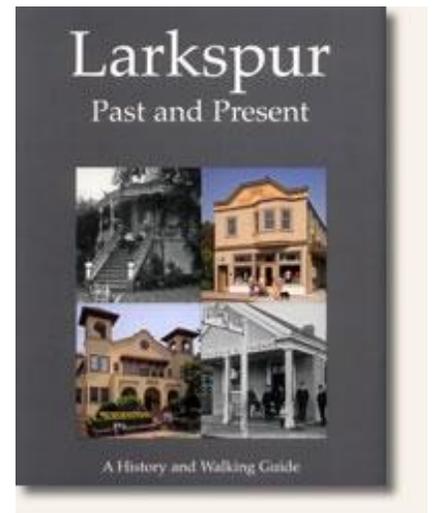
Party at old Rod and Gun Club (Crossley)



Interior of Crossley Bridge Club (Crossley)

Larkspur Heritage Preservation Board and the Arks...

Interested in learning more about the Greenbrae Boardwalk? A more in-depth discussion of the individual arks dotting the walkway, the history of the area and observations from recent Boardwalk residents can be found in Larkspur, Past and Present: A History and Walking Guide, pp. 300-308. Detailed descriptions of the construction of individual residences provide a picture of the diversity of style among the 49 homes. (The book was published by the Larkspur Heritage Preservation Board in 2010.)



Larkspur Heritage Preservation Book for purchase from Larkspur City Hall



Aerial View of Corte Madera Creek Basin, Mt. Tam and San Quentin Peninsula

Hermann Family Memories of the Greenbrae Arks & Creek...

Anne Hermann Lamborn, Katharine (Kit) Hermann,
Robin Hermann Moller

I grew up spending the summers going up and down Corte Madera Creek in little skiffs, canoes, and later sailboats. To my knowledge, I was the first person to ever sail on the Creek. My sailboat was called The Carrot. I dyed the sail green with Rit dyes and painted the boat orange like a carrot. I had the best time every afternoon in the summer. It is hard to imagine that there was a little yacht club.

My brother Mike and I were really skilled at riding our bikes on the boardwalks. Our tires seldom got trapped in the cracks between the boards, but occasionally they did and we fell down. It was never serious, of course.

- Anne Hermann Lamborn

Our house was on Bayview Road at the foot of the hill by Marin General and was situated on the marsh next to Corte Madera Creek. Of course that has been filled in by South Eliseo and all of the medical buildings now. The creek was an asset... Before the Bon Air Bridge was built in 1954, there was a walking and carriage bridge made of wood ... you had to line up the car wheels with the wood slats to get across... very scary, even on foot for a 5 year old, especially when it flooded.



*Bon Air Hill, Corte Madera Creek and Arks at site of future Bon Air Bridge 1954
(Jack Hermann Photo)*

The arks on the Magnolia side of CM creek had garages and docks. Around 1956, they decided to tear them down. The fire department used them for practice.

-Katharine (Kit) Hermann



Greenbrae Arks used for KFD Fire Practice 1956 (Jack Hermann Photo)

Calendar

2018

April 19: KGHS Board Meeting
9:00-11:00 am Bon Air
Conference Room

**May 5: Community Heritage
& History Day Celebration
11-2... hosted by KGHS and
the Bon Air Center at Bon Air
Center**

May 10: KGHS Board Meeting
9:00-11:00 am Bon Air
Conference Room

Did you remember to renew your Membership?

Send a check to KGHS at
Box 236, Kentfield CA 94914
\$20 Senior/student to what
every you wish to contribute!

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