

Kentfield Greenbrae Historical Society

Historian

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www.kghs.org

info@kghs.org

President's Message

Water, water everywhere: during these often chilly and damp months of winter, H2O directs the trajectory of both our adventures and our day-to-day lives. Umbrellas, slippery roadways, damp clothes and a damper (smellier!) dog often punctuate my week's activities. The glorious flip-side to winter weather in Marin is those occasional brilliantly sunny days and the green, green hills offering the promise that Spring is just beyond the next few storms.

As detailed in this issue of The Historian, the impact of rain in the Ross Valley has often gone far beyond inconvenience: excerpts from In the Heart of Marin as well offerings from Sandy Guldman of Friends of the Corte Madera Creek Watershed detail past floods, historical flood control efforts and look to the future direction of the watershed management.

If you're looking for a few rainy day activities, stop by our pop-up store and gallery some Monday morning or find a cozy spot to settle in with our history of Kentfield and Greenbrae, In the Heart of Marin!

Stay warm, stay dry, stay safe!

Susan Morrow
Co-President, 2019-2020

Come Visit our updated Pop Up Store & Gallery!

Our **KGHS Pop Up Store & Gallery** is next to Peet's in the Bon Air Center. We are now open on **Monday Mornings from 9:30-11:30** and for special events. We can also make arrangements for other times if you would like to visit, show friends our local history or make purchases. If you are interested in being a volunteer in the Pop Up, please contact us at info@kghs.org.



KGHS Calendar...

2020 Calendar of Events

JANUARY

January 27: KGHS Pop Up Store & Gallery Open 9:30-11:30

FEBRUARY

February 3: KGHS Pop Up Store & Gallery Open 9:30-11:30

February 10: KGHS Pop Up Store & Gallery Open 9:30-11:30

February 13: **KGHS Board Meeting 9-11 In the Bon Air Conference Room**

February 17: KGHS Pop Up Store & Gallery Open 9:30-11:30

February 24: KGHS Pop Up Store & Gallery Open 9:30-11:30

**SATURDAY MAY 2:
Community Heritage and
History Day 11 AM - 2
PM BON AIR CENTER**



Kentfield Floods: An Annual Event

Excerpts from *In the Heart of Marin* by Dewey Livingston

Kentfield's location at the head of a large marsh, where almost the entire Corte Madera Creek watershed meets the San Francisco Bay tides, was a place of serious flooding as the town's low-elevation neighborhoods and areas as far as Ross and San Anselmo were inundated on a regular basis. Before construction of College Avenue in the 1860's and the railroad grade in the 1870s, the entire area from Ross to the site of Kent School was a flood plain with two channels of Corte Madera Creek at either edge. This is the area where Kent Avenue was laid out and developed, and Granton Park was built, and the lower parts of College of Marin and Kent Middle School now sit. Creek realignment by the railroad company at Ross cause the cessation of the major flow through the southern channel- which remains partly tidal and called Murphy Creek- and pushed the entire watershed flow through the northern channel, establishing it as the Corte Madera Creek as we know it. This made for increased flooding, which was entirely more problematic after the flats were filled with housing tracts.

In February of 1925 a particularly bad flood wreaked havoc in Kentfield. Called "the worst rain in the history of Marin County" at the time, from seven to nine inches fell overnight... "The water at the south end of Ross reached a height of six feet along Kent Avenue."...



An event in the 19202 flooded Corvi's vegetable gardens and the state highway (College Avenue). This view appears to have been taken from Richard Diener's porch, now 802 College Avenue. (California Historical Society)

Tired of the annual drenching and still smarting from the 1925 flood, residents called for widening, dredging and cleaning the creek in the 1930s...In fact, plans for a wide, dredged channel from old Ross Landing to the bay had been drawn as early as 1871 when the government published a map of tidelands. Little or no dredging

occurred until the 1950s, when Niels Schultz worked with the Army Corp of Engineers in realigning lower Corte Madera Creek, allowing extensive creekside development on fill created by the dredging.

In Kentfield, flooding continued, including a February 1940 event that topped fences in Granton Park, and a January 1943 flood that was described in the San Rafael Independent: "Crashing down two days ago the storm accompanied by winds of hurricane velocity left three dead, two injured, flooded business houses and [left] thousands of dollars in property damage in its wake."...



"Kentfield's central district and portions of the campus of the College of Marin were among the area inundated as more than eight inches of rain cascaded into the county in a 24-hour period." reported the Independent Journal in 1955. (Marin History Museum)

If any flood is to be remembered, it might be the great flood of December 1955, when more than 8 inches of rain fell in a 24-hour period... Although serious flooding occurred on an average of every four years, residents remember smaller floods on an annual basis... Priscilla Bull went "out in a friend's rowboat on the old College of Marin football field when it flooded." More adventurous young men launched a motorboat and

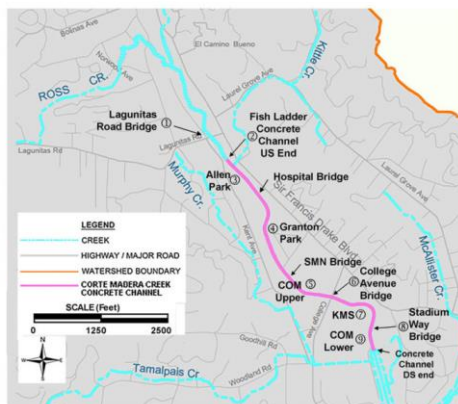
would water ski on the football field. "Ben Chollar and Peter Allen had a boat with a motor," recalled Marjean Sellman, "and we would go down there and water ski from goalpost to goalpost. The rains were like the pineapple rains, they were warm, so you're out there in that yucky water, waterskiing. It was fun!"...



Water, water everywhere: water skis on the College of Marin football field, 1950s. (Richard Torney Collection)

Corte Madera Creek Flood Risk Management Project ... Sandy Guldman, Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed

This project replaces the long-lived, but ill-fated US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) project. Now that the USACE's active involvement has ended, a new project description is being developed in consultation with stakeholders. This project has numerous components in different stages of planning. Please go to the [Friends of the Corte Madera Creek Watershed](http://www.friends-of-corte-madera-creek-watershed.org) website for a detailed breakdown of this project:



Project areas (see text for descriptions of conceptual plans):

- ① Lagunitas Road Bridge
- ② Fish Ladder
- ③ Allen Park
- ④ Granton Park
- ⑤ COM Upper
- ⑥ College Avenue Bridge
- ⑦ Kent Middle School (KMS)
- ⑧ Stadium Way Bridge
- ⑨ COM Lower

Source: Base map modified from Ross Valley Watershed Program map

History of Flooding in the Corte Madera Creek Watershed

Friends of the Corte Madera Creek Watershed website

Between 1914 and 1960 there were twelve damaging floods of the valley floor or about one flood every four years. Since 1960 damaging floods have occurred less frequently for several reasons, including better creek maintenance, construction of a concrete channel in Kentfield and Ross, and the fact that 14 out of the 38 years were relatively dry with rainfall between 42% and 75% of the average. Even so, the largest and third largest floods of record occurred during this time, in January 1982 and March 1983. The flood of January 3-5, 1982 was the largest on record and caused considerable damage in San Anselmo, Ross, Kentfield, and Larkspur. Flood water 4 to 5 feet deep flowed down Poplar and Kent avenues with enough force to move cars.

On February 2, 1998, just as water began to come out of the channel at the Lagunitas Road bridge and at Granton Park, the rain eased up and the water level dropped. A flood on December 31, 2005 reached levels only slightly below those of the 1982 flood, and has spurred town and county officials to initiate an ambitious program to reduce future flooding. Many creekside homeowners have raised their houses to reduce damage from future flooding.

Kentfield & Greenbrae/Larkspur Restoration Plans

A Proposal to Remove Lower Reaches of the Corte Madera Creek Concrete Channel was funded by Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed, and presents alternatives to setback walls and berms in Kentfield. These conceptual designs will be analyzed in the EIR that the Flood Control District will prepare for flood management in Ross and Kentfield.

DOWNSTREAM SECTION

* Removes the channel floor and bank of the channel beside COM athletic fields from the Stadium Way

Footbridge to the downstream end of the channel (approx. 450 lineal feet); removes both channel walls in the downstream 150 feet

* Restores tidal wetland, transition zone, and mud flat habitat to accommodate sea-level rise.



Existing and proposed plans for Corte Madera Creek (Friends of the Corte Madera Creek)

KENT MIDDLE SCHOOL REACH

* Removes the channel floor and concrete wall adjacent to KMS if a design acceptable to the Kentfield School District can be developed from the College Avenue Bridge downstream to the Stadium Way Footbridge (approx. 1,400 lineal feet); however, KMS gym sits close to the creek and a wall is required on both sides of the channel in this area

* Requires increased creek capacity at College Avenue (alternatives are being developed)

* Requires replacing Stadium Way Footbridge (in collaboration with Marin County Parks and Safe Pathways to School)

* Requires modification of a Ross Valley Sanitary District (RVSD) siphon attached to the existing Stadium Way Footbridge

COLLEGE OF MARIN MAIN CAMPUS

* Removes the channel floor and concrete channel wall on the parking lot side of the creek, extending from the College Avenue Bridge to the new Science-Math-Nursing building bridge (approx. 1,000 lineal feet)

* Provides visual enhancement to core of the COM campus

* Requires replacing the old footbridge leading to the core of campus (SMN building bridge retained)

More details on the [Friends of the Corte Madera Creek Watershed](#) website.

We need your continued support!

It's never too late to renew or join! If you know of friends and neighbors who are interested in preserving our community and recognizing local history, please forward this newsletter to them and encourage them to become a member.

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.**

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