

# Kentfield Greenbrae Historical Society

## Historian

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[www.kghs.org](http://www.kghs.org)

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### President's Message

As we get older, we seem to get more nostalgic for the way things used to be. Life seemed much simpler and the pace much slower. If you look at the photos of Kentfield and Greenbrae that were taken in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we are right. Hills were covered with cows and wildflowers, the roads were often dirt, flower and vegetable gardens lined College Avenue. Northbound motorists had to turn left from Highway 101 on to Sir Francis Drake, waiting on the highway until the southbound cars had passed! The trains stopped running in the 1930's and gradually more and more homes were built and schools, a hospital, shopping centers and bridges over the creek were added to the community. We seem to be in the next reincarnation of both Marin General Hospital and the Bon Air Bridge to accommodate the future needs of our hustling community.

Every year KGHS goes into the Third Grade Classes at Bacich as part of the student's community studies curriculum. We share photo presentation called "Then and Now," featuring contrasting photos of the early years with what one would see today. The kids are very enthusiastic, especially if they know the location... and live near it. They like the stories of what it was like to be a kid in the '40s and '50s. Our local KGHS historians Dewey Livingston and Richard Torney have updated this presentation and will be presenting it at our Annual Members Meeting on October 25(see below). It's a wonderful reminder of the beauty that surrounds us, and the history behind the communities of Kentfield and Greenbrae. Please join us and bring a friend!

Marilee Rogers  
Co-President, 2018-2019

### KGHS Members Meeting October 25

**SAVE THURSDAY OCTOBER 25, 2018  
ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING**

**6:00 - 8:00 PM**

**KENT SCHOOL MULTI PURPOSE ROOM**

**6:00 pm Tour of the new Kent Middle School Facilities  
7:00 pm Meeting and Slide Presentation**

**"The Heart of Marin: Then and Now"  
Historians \*Dewey Livingston & Richard Torney**

The enthusiasm generated at the Community Heritage and History Day for our local history has encouraged us to bring back the "Dewey and Richard Show" for our fall member's meeting. These two local historians have been instrumental in preserving and recording the history of Kentfield and Greenbrae. They will narrate a revised slide presentation of the "Heart of Marin." Please save the date and tell your friends.

\*Dewey Livingston is the author of our book "*In the Heart of Marin: A History of Kentfield and Greenbrae*",



*Corvi Gardens 1922  
(Anne T Kent California Room)*



*College of Marin parking lot 2014  
(Richard Torney Collection)*

### Introducing Grant Althouse, New Kent Principal

The Kentfield School District welcomes Grant Althouse as the new principal at Kent Middle School beginning this Fall. Grant comes to Kentfield from a successful tenure as an elementary school principal, a middle school assistant

principal, and fifth grade teacher in the Palo Alto Unified School District.

“Throughout our interview process, Grant stood out as a dynamic educator who is committed to the whole child,” said Liz Schott, Superintendent Kentfield School District. “I have never heard such praise for a professional and a person as I did when speaking to Grant’s references. It was quite inspirational.”

Grant holds a M.A. in education administration from Santa Clara University and a B.A. in English with a minor in education from U.C. Davis. Althouse has been a noted speaker on social emotional learning, inclusion, and middle school leadership at national educational conferences and completed courses on Next Generation Science Standards, social-emotional development, equity, reading, writing, and he attended Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education’s prestigious Art of Leadership program.

## George Demont Otis returns to MCFL Annex

**M C** MARIN COUNTY  
**F L** FREE LIBRARY

### VISIONS OF MARIN:

#### GEORGE DEMONT OTIS, AMERICAN IMPRESSIONIST



Artist & historian **Mary Gilardi** will screen her film *Visions of Marin* documenting the life and work of American Impressionist painter George Demont Otis, who lived at his studio-home in Kentfield from 1934 until his death in 1961. Otis’ paintings of Marin capture the beauty of our landscape and along the way document our evolving history and geography. Afterwards, using the California Room’s collection of Otis paintings as a point of departure, historian **Dewey Livingston** will take us on a trip through time, showing us how the Marin scenes Otis painted have changed over time.

SPONSORED BY THE ANNE T. KENT CALIFORNIA ROOM

**Monday October 15th at 6:30 pm**

California Room Map & Special Collections Annex

Marin Commons: 1600 Los Gamos, Suite 182 (via Lobby B), San Rafael, California

Call 415.473.7419 or visit [www.marinlibrary.org/](http://www.marinlibrary.org/)



Requests for accommodations may be made by calling (415) 473-3220 (voice/TTY) or 711 for the California Relay Service or Emailing [library@marincounty.org](mailto:library@marincounty.org) at least **four work days** in advance of the event. Copies of documents are available in alternative formats, upon request.

## KGHS Calendar...

### 2018

October 11: KGHS Board  
**October 15:** History Talks at MCFL Annex: **Visions of Marin: George Demont Otis** with Mary Gilardi and Dewey Livingston 6:30 pm  
**October 25: Annual Members Meeting from 6:00-8:00 pm**  
**"The Heart of Marin: Then and Now, 2.0"**  
**Kent Multi Purpose Room**

## Did you renew?

Renewal notices and reminders were sent out this summer. It’s not too late! We have added the option for local Non-Profits to become members at \$25 a year, ensuring that you will get our newsletter and updates about the 2019 Community Heritage and History Day.

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.**

## The Kent Family finds Paradise

*(Excerpts from In the Heart of Marin: A History of Kentfield and Greenbrae by Dewey Livingston pages 37)*

Deep in Kent family lore is the story of their matriarch's first view of what would become their longtime home. As the story goes, Mrs. Albert E. Kent took a buggy ride from her rented home in San Rafael over the south ridge and, as the Ross Valley vista unfolded below with Mt. Tamalpais as a backdrop, she proclaimed what she saw to be "a vision of paradise" or some such words of delight.

What Adaline Kent saw that spring day in 1872 was a bowl-shaped valley, often shaded by the distinctive and pleasantly shaped east peak of Mt. Tamalpais. The lower hills steepened as they rose to sharp ridges, clad in emerald green native grasses, oaks, buckeyes, bay trees, and clusters of redwoods. A small knoll near the center offered not only a prime view of the mountain but a wide vista of the lower Ross Valley, including the picturesque marsh and creek with the surrounding oak-studded hills, culminating with the sheen of northern San Francisco Bay in the distant east.

Of course this was paradise...



*An early view of the Kent estate showing the Richardson house, the first to be built by the Kents while waiting for their big house to be completed. Estate Manager Troop Richardson and his family lived in the house for decades. Later, William and Elizabeth Kent remodeled the old house and lived here with their family, as did their daughter Elizabeth Arnold and her family. The house stands today as the oldest in Kent Woodlands, and probably the oldest in Kentfield. (Marin History Museum)*

As Kentfield grew and areas were developed, there was of course a need for roads.

*(Excerpts from In the Heart of Marin: A History of Kentfield and Greenbrae by Dewey Livingston pages 126-127)*

As for the old state highway, now a county road referred to as the "old Redwood Highway" but soon to be named College Avenue, its condition was a concern. A boardwalk acted as the sidewalk on the west

side of the road, owing to the marshy conditions and common flooding. The bridge across the creek was made of wood and needed improvement. Locals hoped to use convict labor from San Quentin, currently occupied on the new state highway, to get the work done. Eventually a wider concrete bridge was installed. The intersection with the new Drake Highway (*Kentfield corners in front of the KFD*) remained a hazard, with no stop signs or signals. A merchant asked that the corner be patrolled on weekends because of "reckless drivers cutting across the gas station grounds in defiance of regulations, [which] constitute a grave menace."



*One of the local boardwalks and county road (later State Highway and College Avenue) looking north towards Kentfield Corners. (Newall Snyder Collection)*



*College Avenue 2014 looking north with the crossing guard in front of Kent School.*

*(Richard Torney Collection)*

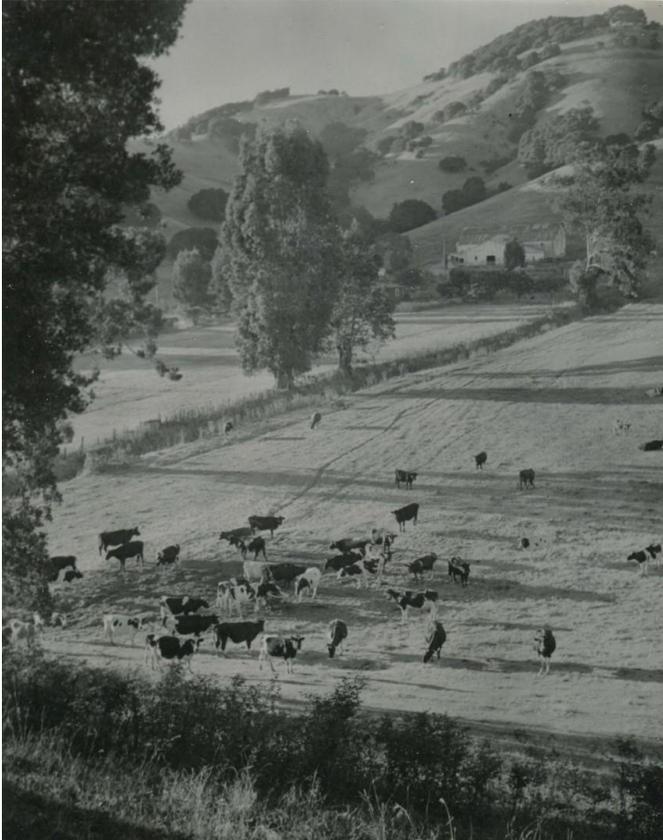
(More stories can be found in our book *In the Heart of Marin: A History of Kentfield and Greenbrae* by Dewey Livingston)

Purchase at [www.kghs.org](http://www.kghs.org)

## Greenbrae: Verdant Hills, Growing Neighborhoods

(Excerpts from *In the Heart of Marin: A History of Kentfield and Greenbrae* by Dewey Livingston pages 239; 317-351)

Channeling his Scottish roots, James Ross called the pretty hills east of Ross Landing "Greenbrae." From Wolfe Grade to San Quentin Point, the oak-dotted ridge and marsh-lined lowlands had served as a popular example of Marin's rural splendor for seventy years after the younger Ross's death in 1975. In the post war rush to develop housing for a growing Bay Area, these hills were transformed into oak-dotted communities that now have a history of their own.



*A bucolic scene at the Greenbrae Dairy in the 1940's- soon to become the community of Greenbrae. (Bob Hough photo)*

Ross's 906-acre Greenbrae property was used exclusively as a dairy ranch, but before then the property's riches were made use of. With adjacent salt marshes and game-filled hills, it was a valuable site for subsistence of Coast Miwok Indians. On the rare piece of Greenbrae land sold by Ross, Tom Biggins and his partners made bricks up near the Ross Landing end of the ranch, and later the Remillard brothers opened a larger brick works farther out on the Point. It also hosted an exclusive, yet short-lived resort hotel...

The area that comprises today's Greenbrae, between the old rail line and Manor Road near Wolfe Grade, was relatively quiet for almost a century- its hills grazed by dairy cows and the creek enjoyed by boaters and summer residents- until post-war progress finally brought the forgotten tract into the twentieth century...

The big news of the early decade [1950's] was the construction and opening of Greenbrae School, which would cater to the first through fifth grades. Greenbrae developer Niels Schultz donated a pretty 7 1/2 acres east of Eliseo Drive for an elementary school, keeping his promise to create a well-rounded community....



*The new Greenbrae School [The dairy farm was to the right behind the trees] (Kentfield School District)*

Classes commenced at Greenbrae in 1951, and, by the end of the 1951-52 session... As soon as the new school opened, talks began about adding four more classrooms... In 1957 the sixth grade class moved from Kent to Greenbrae's new classroom wing. Enrollment continued to grow but declined sharply in the 80's forcing the closing of Greenbrae School in 1981.



*Greenbrae School Park 2014 (Richard Torney Collection)*

## Board of Directors

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Author: Dewey Livingston