

# Kentfield Greenbrae Historical Society Historian

February 2024, Volume 12, Issue 1

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

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## President's Message

We all know that the Corte Madera Creek is at the heart of Marin, especially Greenbrae and Kentfield. We used to call it the “slough” when I was growing up. There was no way across it... it defined our road system and future housing developments. Yes, we waded in it, even swam in it, with the mud oozing up between our toes. It was a flood plain, a mud flat and now a restored salt marsh. We had no idea what was hiding in there from plants and animals to toxic waste and debris from years of dumping. Today we seem to take it for granted, especially the lovely Creekside Park that abuts its shore and has been beautifully restored over the years.

I remember the floods and wonder why houses were ever allowed to be built there... it didn't make sense. For years, I would walk the bike path with its wonderful views of Mt. Tam, watch the egrets along the shore and feel a sense of calm. It might not have become this special place if not for some very concerned residents who managed to create this sanctuary for our community. The history of Creekside Park was well documented by Neil Park in the anthology below.

The 27-acre Hal Brown Park at Creekside Park and Playground continue to bring community members and nature lovers together in the heart of Marin. It is a real treasure. Thank you, Neil Park, and all who helped you. Visit it soon!

Marilee Rogers  
Co-president, 2023-2024

## KGHS GALLERY at BON AIR



**VISIT US  
AT BON AIR CENTER**  
(next to Roadrunner)

**Second Tuesday of Month  
11AM TO 2 PM**

**Friday, May 17: Special  
Presentation on Lee Painting**  
**Saturday, May 18:**  
Community Day with Bon Air

**Ross Landing 1871  
Joseph Lee**

## HELP US REACH OUR GOAL!

We are 2/3's of the way to meeting our fundraising goal to acquire the extraordinary and historically-significant 1871 painting by Joseph Lee—featuring Ross Landing, which later became Kentfield—as well as acquiring much needed materials and services to securely archive KGHS's collections for permanent access by the public.

### **WAYS TO DONATE:**

Cash donation (online at [www.kghs.org](http://www.kghs.org) or by check KGHS, PO Box 236, Kentfield, CA 94914)

A donation of \$1000 or more will entitle you to a limited archival giclee print of the painting.



*Ross Landing by Joseph Lee circa 1871*

The 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.

## Creekside Park 1972-2009 (excerpts)

by Neil Park (2014)

Thirty-Seven years ago in 1977, the property behind Bacich School, which is now known as Creekside Park, was a former marsh. This property, like all the properties bordering Corte Madera Creek from the San Francisco Bay to what is now the College of Marin, had been a thriving tidal salt marsh and wildlife habitat. In 1972 however, this 29-acre site was a virtual waste land, having been used as a dump site and covered by the dredging spoils placed by the Army Corps of Engineers in dredging the channel of Corte Madera Creek.



*Creekside Marsh*

In early 1972, I became aware of the proposed plan for the acquisition of the property from its owner, the Roman Catholic Welfare Corporation of San Francisco, and the development of approximately 160 condominium units. Access to the property was proposed to be from Bon Air Road, but the plan also contemplated the extension of Wolfe Grade Road through what is now the Bacich School parking lot, to the development and on to Bon Air Road.

Alarmed at the scope of the proposed development and its effect on the school, I joined a number of local residents in forming a committee to oppose the project and seek alternatives. We wanted the church to sell to the community, not the developer. When meetings with the developer were unsuccessful, the committee sought to stop the project by opposing the developer's zoning applications before the County Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. ... Having spent many months in 1972 and 1973 in opposition to this project and recognizing that the property had the potential of being returned, at least partially, to its original state, we set out to try to do just that. Through the efforts of local residents who volunteered their time and professional expertise (legal, financial, landscape design, land use), County Service Area 17 was formed to include all properties within the Kentfield School District, plus the homes across Corte Madera Creek in Hillview...The Advisory Board was tasked with finding a way to not only purchase the property, by at least matching the offer of the developer, but also to secure funds for its renovation and ongoing maintenance. The dream of Creekside Park began to take shape.

To secure the necessary funds, the Board of Supervisors authorized two measures to be put on the November 1973 ballot...for the acquisitions and development of the proposed park and for the ongoing maintenance of the park. ... This initial plan, depicting a revitalized salt marsh and a new uplands area for native plants and a playground area, was used in numerous "get out the vote" meetings ... both measures passed with over 90% of those voting. With funds in hand, it remained for the Advisory Board to convince the property owner to sell to the community rather than to the developer, an effort that took several months. In November of 1974, the bonds were sold, title to the property was transferred to the county, and the Advisory Board, together with the County Parks and Recreation Department was able to start the process of creating the Park.

One of the first tasks was the selection of a landscape architect to create a Master Plan and oversee the Park's implementation. ...

Numerous obstacles had to be surmounted in the creation of the Park. The dredging spoils, which had killed the marsh had to be moved from the lower marsh area to uplands areas. Before anything could be planted in this "soil", we had to allow the winter rains of two years to leach the salts that had come from the creek. To reintroduce salt marsh plants to the lower area, cuttings and seeds had to be located and hand planted. As with any major project, actual costs

exceeded original estimates... In 1978, a major cost was avoided when, through the efforts of Kentfield resident Paul Violich and then Supervisor Barbara Boxer, PG&E was convinced to cover the vast portion of the cost of removing the unsightly overhead power lines that crossed the property and placing these lines underground. In 1979, some State Parks funding became available which, when combined with our remaining funds, allowed installation of irrigation, planting of the turf, the construction of the play structure and picnic area as well as the path connecting the Park to Bacich School.



*Restoration of Creekside Park*

By 1988, the majority of the plantings were mature, and the Park was completed. At this time the Advisory Board ceased to have regular responsibilities, maintenance of the Park being handled by the County. ...As then Supervisor Barbara Boxer wrote to the Board of supervisors in 1979, "The successful re-establishment of a salt marsh in an area previously inundated with dredging spoils reflect the basic philosophy of the neighborhood that they have been willing to pay for unique park and environmental improvements out of their own pockets and make these areas readily available to all of the people of the county."

Over the years countless people of all ages have enjoyed the Park. Schools have used the Park for educational purposes. Children have enjoyed the play area, which is open but safely separated from traffic. Others have merely enjoyed the serenity of this unique setting. The acquisition and improvement bonds have long since been paid and retired. Today, with Marin Catholic High School indicating that they wish to make a greater vehicle use of the current path between the Park and the Swim and Tennis Club, the County has announced that it needs to address this issue and at the same time look at the Park to see if it still meets the needs of the community. Consultants have been engaged to prepare a new Master Plan, and the County is inviting the community to participate in this process. While certain matters certainly need to be studied and aging play structures need to be replaced, it is my sincere hope that the original concept of this unique Park will be maintained. Neil M. Park (2014)  
Chairman, CAS Advisory Board 1972-1988

## Hal Brown Park at Creekside

The heart of this 27-acre community park is the playground. Preschoolers ages two to five can enjoy sand and water play, spinning bowls, swings, tricycle track, and shade structures. Clapper Rail and Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse nests reflect endangered species in neighboring marshland. Ages five to twelve can climb a 17-foot net or 8-foot wall, and turbo slide from a mini-overlook.

Visitors can also take advantage of an expansive turf area for play and relaxation, a health and wellness grove with medicinal plants, benches, picnic tables, a pétanque court, amphitheater, and overlook with stunning views of Corte Madera Creek, Creekside Marsh, and Mt. Tamalpais



*Marin Arts.com*

Picnic tables, benches, playground areas, pathway, restrooms, and overlook are accessible. Dogs are allowed on leash and must not enter wetland areas because of sensitive habitat.



*Marin Arts.com*

In 2010, the Board of Supervisors along with the Marin County Parks and Open Space Commission unanimously recommended the renaming of Creekside Park in honor of Hal Brown... officially known as "Hal Brown Park at Creekside". This park reopened on February 14, 2011, following extensive renovations.

“Hal” Brown, who served County government for nearly 30 years, passed in 2012. Brown was in his 7th term in office as a Supervisor, having been appointed to the seat in 1983 by his cousin, then first time governor, Jerry Brown, to fill the seat being vacated by Barbara Boxer upon her election to U.S. House of Representatives. Brown’s interests and achievements spanned a broad range of issues. A champion of open space, he was involved in the acquisition and/or preservation of over 1700 acres of open space in Ross Valley.

## Friends of the Corte Madera Creek Update

[https://friendsofcortemaderacreek.org/new\\_site/restoration/larkspur/](https://friendsofcortemaderacreek.org/new_site/restoration/larkspur/)

### Creekside Marsh at Hal Brown Park...

Friends is involved with two projects at Creekside Marsh at Hal Brown Park. One project is to improve the health of the southeastern part of the marsh (the panhandle) and another to compensate for the unavoidable impacts of bridge construction.

**Southeastern Creekside Marsh Culvert Replacement and Habitat Enhancement:** This project has two components. The first replaced the old, decomposing culvert just upstream of the Bon Air Bridge which muted tidal flow into the panhandle part of the marsh. Three larger parallel culverts were installed to convey enough tidal flow to match the equilibrium width of the channel in the marsh near the culvert.

The second component was to increase the amount of marsh vegetation. Tests showed that bare areas with no marsh vegetation had almost no pore space, too much gravel, high pH, and high salinity. Part of the poor soil was excavated and replaced by Young Bay Mud, which quickly sprouted pickleweed, saltgrass, and native cordgrass. Poor soil in another area was amended and planted with native plants.



*Soil to be replaced 2012*



*Same site 2023*

Friends has managed all the planting. The project has been funded mostly from Community Services Area 17 monies used to maintain and enhance Creekside Park and by Regional Water Quality Control Board

finances collected from the Ross Valley Sanitary District.

Friends of Corte Madera Creek  
Watershed  
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**Join, Renew or make a Donation**

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.

**VISIT [www.kghs.org](http://www.kghs.org)!  
DONATE, RENEW 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.

### KGHS Board 2023-24

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**Kentfield Greenbrae**  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY