



CITY OF LARKSPUR

HANDBOOK *for residents interested in serving on* **BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

"I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion by education."

Thomas Jefferson

CATHERINE WAY, MAYOR

COUNCILMEMBERS:

ANN MORRISON KEVIN HAROFF

LARRY CHU DAN HILLMER

Dan Schwarz, City Manager

SPRING 2016

SOMETHING ABOUT OUR HISTORY

(Source: Larkspur Past & Present a History & Walking Guide, 1991, the Larkspur Heritage Committee.)

Long before people made Larkspur their playground the coast Miwok Indians of the Penutian language family discovered the area's appeal. They fished the streams, dug shellfish in the marshes, ground acorns for meal and hunted wild fowl, bears and deer on the slopes. They built rancherias on the San Quentin Peninsula and between Monte Vista and the salt marsh. Two Mexican land grants divided up the acreage of Larkspur.

Larkspur began as a logging settlement and slowly expanded to a ranching and dairying area. The town boasted a population of 500 men and three women in 1851. By 1860, when lumbering had denuded the hills, residents had turned to ranching and dairying. It was also the playground of fun-seekers of the middle class, who saw the community as a beautiful recreation area with its streams running off adjacent Mt. Tamalpais and its ridges, its deep canyons filled with redwood and its extensive Corte Madera Creek. Brick makers were in demand for the fast-growing Bay Area. Bricks were molded from clay on the downtown hillside, and a brickyard was built on the San Quentin Peninsula.

When Charles W. Wright bought the King dairy ranch in 1887 for about \$21,000, he had the town surveyed and auctioned off lots large enough to pasture horses and raise chickens at prices ranging from \$125 to \$300. To persuade the North Pacific Coast Railroad to locate a station in town, Wright built five Victorian cottages and submitted station names of "Graystone", after the town's blue-gray rock, and "Larkspur", after the lupine, mis-identified by his British wife.

First summer campers and later 1906 earthquake refugees rented tent sites in Baltimore Canyon. When Larkspur was incorporated in March 1908 its hills were dotted with homes and a collection of arks were moored along the creek banks. By 1910 the City had a year-round population of 594 which swelled to 1,250 people during summer months. In 1913 the city hall was dedicated. With the completion of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937, and the population influx of World War II, Larkspur changed from a rural community to a suburban area. In the period from 1960 to 1970 the population jumped from 5,700 to 10,487 with increased apartment development out-pacing single family homes.

Today the last major parcels have approvals for either development or open space purchase. Larkspur has a population of approximately 12,500, covering a 3½ square mile area. The City is divided by Highway 101, and includes portions of the area commonly known as Greenbrae. Larkspur cherishes its small town character. The search for a hometown can take a lifetime. Some lucky people have found one in Larkspur.