

# Docent reconstructs Quail Hollow Ranch's epic Santa Cruz Mountain history



By [RYAN MASTERS](#) | Santa Cruz Sentinel

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ZAYANTE >> As a volunteer docent for the County of Santa Cruz Park system, Richard James has researched the colorful history of [Quail Hollow Ranch](#) for years. His new tour, "Within These Walls: Ghosts of the Past at Quail Hollow," condenses more than 151 years into roughly two hours.

As all local tales must, James' epic yarn begins with the Ohlone. It also touches upon the property's brief existence as part of the Rancho Zayante land grant before focusing primarily on four Quail Hollow Ranch pioneer families who made important impacts on this property and the local communities — the Kenvilles, the Richards, the Grunigs and the Lanes.

Larry Lane, who owned Quail Hollow from 1937 to 1954, is the most prominent of the property's owner; he was also the founder of [Sunset Magazine](#). However, he's not the only interesting character in the story of Quail Hollow; not by a long shot. Sixteen years after California became the 31st state of the union in 1850, a French-Canadian named Joseph Kenville acquired 44 acres in what is now Quail Hollow Ranch Park under the [Homestead Act](#), according to James. As a young man, Kenville operated a steamship mail delivery service on the Great Lakes. Drawn west by the California Gold Rush, he became a partner in various gold mining claims in Nevada and California Territories before deciding there was more money in driving a stagecoach between Carson City, Nevada and Sacramento.

"It was written that one of Joseph's fondest memories was of transporting Abraham Lincoln in one of his stagecoaches," said James.

In 1862, the 35-year-old Joseph Kenville married Amerika Baker, a 14-year-old resident of The New York House — a hotel, restaurant and stagecoach stop near present-day Carson City, Nevada. Three years later, Kenville brought his young bride to Santa Cruz County and established the first horse-drawn freight line in the county.

During the 36 years they spent at Quail Hollow — 1866 to 1902 — Joseph and Amerika Kenville had 10 children.

"Eight were born here at the ranch and nine children lived to adulthood," said James. "The Kenville's ninth born child, Herbert Kenville, tragically died here at one year of age in 1887 of unknown causes."

The Kenvilles bought an additional 88 acres from an adjoining property owner, Amos Moon. Showing a shrewd business sense, they also convinced the Southern Pacific Railroad Co. to install a "flag stop only" rail siding on their property.

"This rail siding helped Kenville ship ranching and farming products to local and distant cities as quickly as possible and directly from their ranch location," said James. "This gave the Kenville property a distinct advantage in shipping time and costs, and allowed the Quail Hollow Ranch property to become successful early on," said James.

Remnants of the "Kenville" rail stop are visible today on private property outside of the park, according to James.

To learn more about the Kenvilles and the long, rich history of the Quail Hollow Ranch and its surrounding property, sign up for "Within These Walls: Ghosts of the Past at Quail Hollow," a tour of the Santa Cruz County Park with Richard James.