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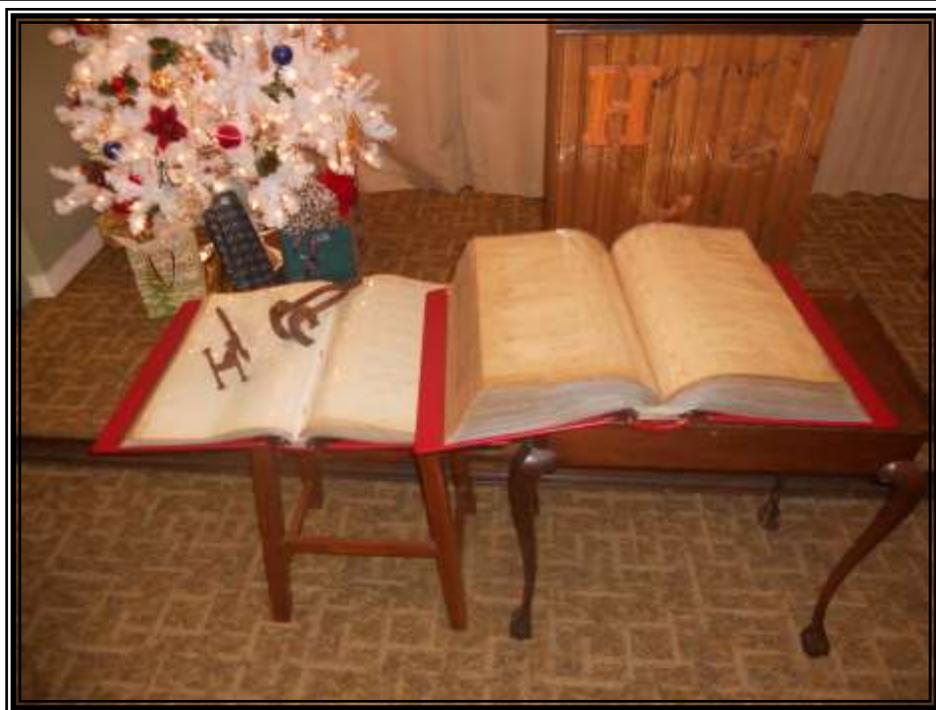
OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

January 2014

## COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, January 16, 2014, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Guest speaker for the program will be Juanita Gex, president of the Pearl River County Historical Society. Mrs. Gex will discuss the Pontalba buildings in the New Orleans French Quarter. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 467-4090. **Respectfully we must insist that you please call by noon on Wednesday, January 15, 2014,** to make your reservation, to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-eight people, and to apprise us of the number for whom to prepare. The price of the lunch is \$10.00.



These are the two restored volumes of *A Record of Marks and Brands*. The two branding irons belong to Executive Director, Charles Gray, which he inherited from his great-great grandfather Clinch Gray, Surveyor General of the Mississippi Territory.

## MEMBERSHIP FEES

The 2014 Membership Drive is on! It's time for current members to renew their membership in the Historical Society and to encourage family and friends to join us too. The price of membership is twenty-five (\$25) per year. The date on your address label is your date of membership expiration. If your label says 12/13 or before, it's time to renew! Please mail your renewal checks to Hancock County Historical Society, P. O. Box 3356, Bay St. Louis, MS 39521.

## Livestock Marks and Brands

By  
Eddie Coleman

Livestock marks and brands have been used since ancient times to determine the ownership of a stockman's animals. The reason they were necessary long ago is that large, communal grazing lands were often used by several farmers in a community. Since then evidence has been found that the ancient Chinese used branding

to identify their cattle long before the time of Confucius. Egyptologists have found tomb paintings depicting the branding of oxen by the early pharaohs. In addition, proof has been uncovered that herdsmen of the Bible—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others—used brands to identify their stock and that even Greeks and Romans used brands for slave identification.

Some of the earliest herdsmen branded the entire side of an animal, giving its lineage, ownership history, etc. In more recent times, the brands became smaller

THE

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Eddie Coleman, Editor  
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Marianne Plum, Webmaster**LOBRANO HOUSE  
HOURS**MONDAY — FRIDAY  
10:00AM — 3:00PM  
Closed: 12:00—1:00 (lunch)**MISSION STATEMENT**

“TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION.”

and were limited to certain areas on the body of the animal—left or right side, foreleg, hindquarter, and so forth. In addition to, or even instead of, the hot branding iron so familiar nowadays, ear markings were also used. These markings were cuts made into the animal’s ears, either left or right or both. Though branding could be used on all livestock—cattle, sheep, hogs, horses—ear markings were not usually used on horses.

Branding and marking were used all over the world in some form, but it was the Spanish who made the practices prevalent in the United States. With its exploration of the New World, Spain brought the custom to the Americas. The practice spread from Mexico northward into what later became the southwestern United States with the Spanish *vaqueros*, or cowboys, and branding specifically became the familiar procedure seen in movie westerns.

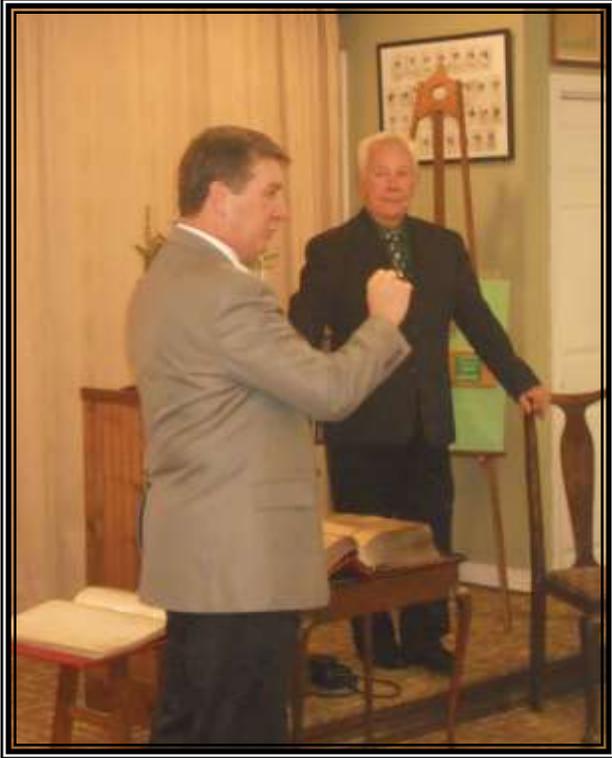
Because the purpose of the brand was to establish legitimate ownership of the livestock and because such a large number of brands were invented, recorded, and used, a method of registering them was developed. Initially, they were registered in the county where the stockman lived. Later, it became necessary to register the brands in a wider area so territorial legislatures required them to be registered with territorial livestock boards and ultimately with state governments when these territories became states.

Although branding is the most recognizable form of livestock identification to most peo-

ple, ear marking seems to have been more prevalent in east Texas and the Southeastern U.S. In fact, as with branding, this practice dates to the Spanish exploration of Florida and the Southeastern U.S. especially along the Gulf Coast. Even though the brand was the legal identification of the animal, the ear mark was also used because it could be seen more readily.

Because the brand or mark was, and still is, considered personal property, each one could be sold or traded, but more often than not, it was passed down from parent to child. In earlier times a son was usually the child to whom the brand was passed. However, it was quite possible for a daughter to inherit the brand or mark and take it into marriage with her. Thus, a genealogical lineage could or can be determined by knowing who possessed or still possesses the brand or mark.

The marks and brands have been most helpful in areas with open ranges to help stockmen determine animal ownership. At one time, Mississippi had no stock law, and in many areas of the state, livestock was allowed to roam freely through the countryside. They foraged for themselves during most of the year, saving the farmer the cost of feeding the animal. Consequently, such a practice produced very lean animals. However, if a farmer wished to kill a young hog or beef for the family, he would round up the animal, place him in a pen, and feed him corn or other fodder for a few months to fatten him up before the slaughter.



Chancery Clerk Tim Kellar reveals the newly restored *Record of Marks and Brands* for Hancock County.

Initially marks and brands in Mississippi were registered in each county. A *Record of Marks and Brands* book, much like the *Record of Marriages* book, was kept at each county courthouse, giving the name of the owner, a drawing of the brand, a description of the ear mark, and the date of registration. Some farmers used only a single brand; others, only a single earmark; still others, a brand and an ear mark; and some, multiple brands and/or marks, each with an entry in the book.

With the passage of a Mississippi stock law in the mid-1960's, the practice of allowing livestock to roam freely was outlawed, and farmers had to keep their stock within penned or fenced areas. In addition, the need for so many brands and marks was lessened, and the registration of such marks and brands was done through the state rather than at the local lev-

el. Currently, it is the Mississippi Agricultural and Livestock Theft Bureau which registers all livestock brands in the state.

Sadly many of these books have been lost in Mississippi counties because some people do not see a need for such records any longer. Hancock County, on the other hand, is quite fortunate that it has a Chancery Clerk who does see a need and also sees a purpose, historical and genealogical, to preserve this record. Although the original books were damaged in Hurricane Katrina, they have been restored through the efforts of county officials and for a time may be viewed at the Hancock County Historical Society.

#### SOURCES:

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### The Installation of the 2014 Board of Directors

The annual Christmas Tea with the installation of the 2014 Board of Directors was held on Thursday afternoon, December 5, from 3:00—5:00 P. M. at the Kate Lobrano House, home of the Hancock County Historical Society at 108 Cue Street, Bay Saint Louis.

After a few opening remarks, Executive Director Charles Gray welcomed Chancery Clerk Tim Kellar, who explained the restoration of the Hancock County *Record of Marks and Brands* book. Both he and Charles related personal stories and histories as testaments to the true value of such a record.

Afterwards Mr. Kellar complimented the Society for the work the members have done in preserving the history of Hancock County and charged the newly elected Board of Directors to continue these efforts. The officers for the coming year are John Gibson, president; Tina Richardson, first vice president; Sally Lindsley, second vice president; Pat Fuchs, treasurer; Betty Krieger, secretary; Jackie Allain, historian; Ellis Cuevas, publicity chairman; and Jerry Zimmerman, member at large.

**NEW MEMBERS**

Chris Estrade  
*Diamondhead, MS*

Anthony and DiAnn Sones  
*Diamondhead, MS*

**Mark Terminology**

Crop  
Overslope  
Sawset  
Splice  
Split  
Staplefork  
Swallowfork  
Underbit  
Undersquare  
Uppersquare

Each of the terms at the left refers to one of many different cuts made into an animal's ear (s). These cuts could be made in either ear or both. When recorded in the book, the mark might be written to read "swallowfork, sawset, split, and two underbits."

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Pictured front row L. to R.— John Gibson, president; Tina Richardson, first vice president, Sally Lindsley, second vice president; Betty Krieger, secretary; Jackie Allain, historian.

Second row L. to R.— Pat Fuchs, treasurer; Ellis Cuevas, publicity chairman; Jerry Zimmerman, member at large.

Third row— Charles Gray, Executive Director



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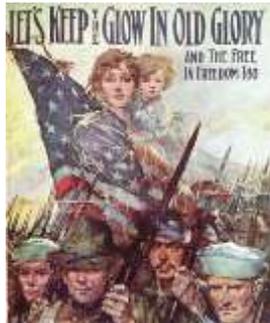
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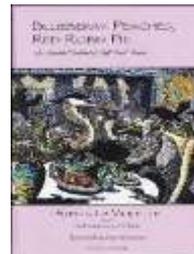
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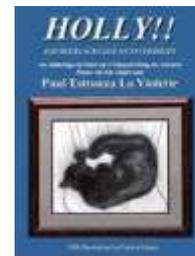
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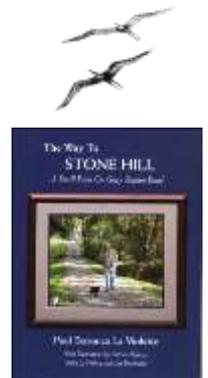
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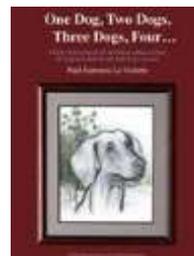
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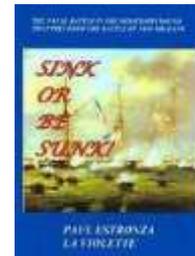
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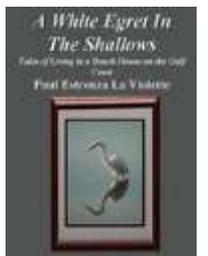
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