

THE

# HISTORIAN

www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

August 2015

## COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, August 20, 2015, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Guest speaker for the program will be local realtor Joey Manieri, whose family lived in the Gainesville community before it became a part of the Stennis Space Center. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 467-4090. **Respectfully we must insist that you please call by noon on Wednesday, August 19, 2015,** 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.

## ANNUAL CEMETERY TOUR

Even though October is still a few months away, it's not too early to begin thinking about and planning the Cemetery Tour. The 22nd Annual Cemetery Tour will be held on Halloween night, Saturday, October 31, 2015, at Cedar Rest Cemetery on Second Street in Bay Saint Louis. Needed are volunteers to prepare the cemetery for the tour, to portray citizens buried there, to act as guides, and to serve at the Lobrano House. To volunteer, please call 228-467-4090. All actors and guides must be members of the Historical Society.



A Norman Rockwell rendering of the Orphan Train

## THE ORPHAN TRAIN MOVEMENT

by  
Eddie Coleman

Although it was not limited to New York City alone, one of the most gripping social problems of the city after the Civil War was the abandonment of infants and even older children in the streets of the city. By 1869, it was no longer an item of news or even of interest to find an abandoned infant on the doorsteps of the home of a rich family, in the hallway of a tenement, or at the entrance to a convent. It has been estimated that between 150,000 and 200,000 children were sent west until the procedure was aban-

doned in the early 1930s because of the Depression and the passing of various laws which provided for such children.

In 1853, a young theological student named Charles Lorine Brace was inspired to found the Children's Aid Society because he saw so many homeless and impoverished children roaming the streets of New York. Seeking those who needed help, he and his staff of volunteers visited orphanages, reformatories, and homes of indigent children. Many parents saw this as an opportunity to secure a better life for their children.

Initially Brace tried to help the children by providing more than just the basic necessities of life—food, clothing, shelter. He believed education was

THE

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Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi 39521**PHYSICAL ADDRESS:**

108 Cue Street

Telephone/Fax [228] 467-4090

**Email address:****hancockcountyhis@bellsouth.net****Website:**[www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com)  
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.”

necessary as was learning a trade. However, after a year he realized the task was too great. Thus, he followed a plan instituted in Boston in the 1840s, sending children westward by train.

Before children left New York, the Children’s Aid Society decided at which towns and cities the train would stop, placed advertisements in local papers, and contacted the appropriate local authorities. It was not decided beforehand which children would be placed with which adoptive parents. Rather, the prospective parents met the train at the prearranged place—depot, civic hall, church, etc.— and made their decisions after inspecting the children. The Society wasn’t concerned with placing the child with a family of a particular religion; however, it did expect the parents to provide religious instruction.

Concurrently, St. Peter’s Convent on Barclay Street was a favorite refuge of distraught mothers, and very often the Sisters on opening their door in the morning would find an infant

deposited on the doorstep. In 1869 Sister Mary Irene of St. Peter’s Convent took the matter of abandoned children to Mother Mary Jerome, the Superior of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. The Mother Superior presented the matter to Archbishop McCloskey who encouraged the Sisters to provide for the care of abandoned children. As a result, the New York Foundling Hospital, operated by the Sisters of Charity, opened in January 1870.

In 1873 the Sisters of the New York Foundling Hospital joined with the Children’s Aid Society in sending many of these orphans westward on orphan trains to be placed with farm and other families in rural America as indentured servants or as adoptees. The idea was that families would provide the children food, clothing, and a living space in return for their help on the farms. It was hoped that the children would become an integral part of the families. In addition, the Sisters required that the children be placed with Catholic families.

To this end, priests in the cities and towns where the train would stop were notified in advance so that parishioners could make requests, often very specific, for these children. For example, prospective parents might request a child of a specific sex, hair and eye color, and complexion. The hospital made every effort to honor these requests so that the child would “fit in” more readily with the chosen family. Quite often the child wore a number on his clothing



Charles Lorin Brace



The building at the left is the first home of the New York Foundling Hospital established by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.

corresponding to one held by the adoptive parents. In this way the parents could welcome the child more readily upon his arrival. From all evidence it appears that the children who came to Bay Saint Louis were sent by the Foundling Hospital.

An "indenture" form was used to place the children. It was a legal document that gave the Sisters of the Foundling Hospital legal recourse without going to court in case the child needed to be removed.

Further, the ideal was for the children to become such an integral part of the families that they would eventually be adopted and become successful members of society, each contributing to the growing nation. Many of them became contributing citizens such as two boys who went on to become governors of South Dakota and Alaska. Unfortunately, not all were law abiding such as the notorious Billy the Kid, also an Orphan Train rider.

At least two of these trains made stops in Bay Saint Louis in 1909 and in 1910, and fortunately the children were of

**ORPHAN CHILDREN  
HERE FRIDAY**

**ELEVEN BOYS AND GIRLS FROM  
NEW YORK BROUGHT TO  
TEKAMAH FOR HOMES**

A number of bright young boys and girls ranging in age from one year up to fifteen will arrive in Tekamah Friday morning from New York looking for happy homes among the good people of this city and community.

The little folks will be seen at the Lyric theatre Friday morning at 10:30 and from 1:30 on in the afternoon. The children will be in charge of Alice A. Bogardus, who was in the city last week arranging details for their coming.

The following committee of prominent men are endorsing the movement: Mayor Lukens, H. L. Webster, E. I. Ellis, J. E. Cornish, E. J. Gane and Orville Chatt.

A party of eleven children, all exceptionally bright and well trained and should appeal to many a home in Tekamah.

the law-abiding kind and became good citizens of the town and the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Among the orphans brought here were Willie J. Adam, Annie Richtner Adam Graham, Margaret Oakley Fayard Cuevas, John Korcinsky Lawrence Damborino, and Thomas Mitchell Luc.

#### WILLIE J. ADAM

Born Joseph Reilly on April 26, 1906, Willie Adam arrived in Bay St. Louis on January 23, 1909. At the young age of twenty-one months he traveled aboard the Orphan Train from New York City to Bay Saint Louis and was adopted by Thomas and Sedonia Adam of Cedar Point. The couple had wanted a child for eight years. One girl and two boys from the train were also adopted by other families in Bay Saint Louis, the girl by the brother of Thomas Adam.

An article on Willie Adam reported in January 1996 that only nine months after his adoption his father died. His mother had to go to court to plead to keep him because at that time single women were not allowed to rear children alone. Her plea to the judge was heart wrenching: "Your honor, we were married for eight years and couldn't have children before we got my little boy. I've just lost my husband, so please don't take my son away too." The judge was so touched that he allowed Mrs. Adam to keep her son on a trial basis for six months.

Mrs. Adam's job as custodian of St. Joseph's Catholic

Church in Cedar Point proved that she was responsible and was able to provide for her son. Willie helped his mother with the cleaning and later became an altar boy. When he was about eleven or twelve he taught Sunday School with the nuns at the church.

Sometime later Mrs. Adam married August Pucheu, and they had a daughter. Unfortunately, when the child was two years old, her mother died. Willie's step-father sold their property in Cedar Point and moved the family to Gulfport. At age fourteen Willie was given the choice of moving with the family or living with one of the three families that wanted him in Cedar Point. Because he had promised his mother to take care of his little sister, he moved to Gulfport.

As an adult Willie married and had one son. He supported his family by working at Barrett's Cleaners and then later opening his own business, Willie's Cleaners. After several years he closed his business but continued in this line of work until blindness forced his retirement when he was in his early eighties.

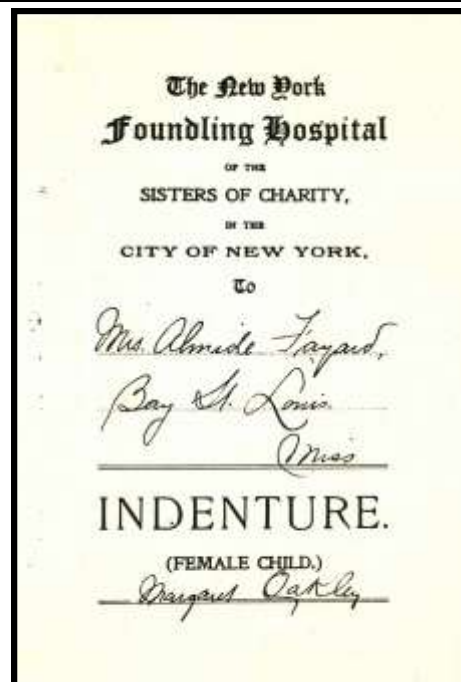
Mr. Adam remained active in the Catholic Church his entire life by joining St. John's church after moving to Gulfport. In addition to helping his mother as a young boy, he held every office in the Knights of Columbus at St. John's and on the state level as well as helping organize the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Gulfport with Monsignor Williams.

### ANNIE RICHTNER ADAM GRAHAM

Annie Richtner Adam Graham was born on December 9, 1906, in New York City to a German father and an Austrian mother. She was twenty-one months old when she arrived in Bay Saint Louis and was indentured to and later adopted by John Sherry Adam and his wife, Mary Bourgeois Adam. Also on the train with her were Louis Roberts and William Adam, the latter being adopted by John Sherry Adam's brother, Tom. Little Annie had the number "205" sewn onto her underwear, and that was the number her adoptive family had been given to match. Years later when her husband chose a box at the post office, he chose #205.

Mrs. Graham attended public school in Bay Saint Louis. Since her family spoke French, she learned French, and luckily her first grade teacher taught in French. She was in the second or third grade before she learned English. She attended school until the eighth grade and then went to work in the Peerless Seafood Factory.

In 1924 Mrs. Graham went to work for the Bell Telephone Co., located at that time in the old *Echo* building on the Beach. She worked for Bell for thirty-two years as a junior and senior operator and as assistant chief supervisor. She knew many citizens of Bay Saint Louis only as customers of Bell. When she left Bell Telephone, she was assistant supervisor of twenty-



Pictured above is an example of an indenture document signed by the sisters of Charity and the prospective adoptive parents.

three operators.

On July 4, 1931, she married William Bryan Graham. They had no children.

### MARGARET OAKLEY FAYARD CUEVAS

Margaret Oakley Fayard Cuevas was born on June 5, 1908, in New York City. She traveled to Bay Saint Louis from the New York Foundling Home aboard one of the orphan trains in September 1910 and was indentured to Mrs. Almieda Fayard on September 14, 1910. Unfortunately, Mrs. Fayard died in 1914, but the child was reared by Mrs. Fayard's son, Freddy, and his wife, Sidonia.

Margaret Fayard attended school in Bay Saint Louis and married Monroe Frank Cuevas on June 25, 1932. They had sev-

en children: Monroe, Jr., Milton, Rose Marie, Donald, Anthony, Irving, and Vincent.

JOHN KORCINSKY  
LAWRENCE DAMBORINO

John Korcinsky Damborino was born in New York City on December 10, 1906, to Annie and Michael Korcinsky, Polish immigrants who returned to Poland. He was admitted by the Sisters of Charity to the New York Foundling home on January 2, 1907.

Mr. Damborino was one of the first groups of orphan children placed by the Sisters of charity in Bay Saint Louis. He was adopted by Alex Damborino and his wife, Lena, on March 12, 1910, at the age of three. He attended Rip University and St. Stanislaus College and was confirmed at Our Lady of the Gulf Catholic Church. [*Rip University was a free night school operated by St. Stanislaus in the early 20th Century.*] On June 18, 1927, he married Margaret Heitzmann of Bay Saint Louis at Our Lady of the Gulf.

For twenty-eight years he worked for the *Sea Coast Echo* and then started his own newspaper, the *Hancock County Eagle*. He remained the owner/editor of this weekly paper for about twenty years before selling it to the *Echo*.

When he was a teen, he suspected he was adopted and asked his mother about it. She firmly said, "No," and then proceeded to burn his adoption papers. Admitting having an adopted child was not a socially



Orphan Train children waiting to be adopted  
Notice the number placard each child is wearing.

accepted thing to do in the early 1900's. However, he continued to wonder about his adoption until he was grown. He wrote and visited the sisters of Charity in New York, and with their help secured a birth certificate from the Bureau of Records, Department of Health, New York City. Other than his parents' names as listed on the birth certificate, he was unable to learn anything more definite than that his parents had probably returned to Poland.

THOMAS MITCHELL  
LUC

Thomas Mitchell Luc was born in 1907, but the actual date and place (probably New York City) are unknown. He arrived by train in Bay Saint Louis and was adopted by Victor Luc and his wife Katie Damborino Luc. Mrs. Luc's brother, Alex Damborino, also adopted a

son from the same train (John Damborino).

As happens so many times, after the Lucs adopted their son, they had natural-born children—eight in fact! Thomas Luc was well along in his teens before he suspected he was adopted; however, he never told anyone of his suspicion. His oldest sister said that she knew it because she had heard her mother "talking to that man about it"—probably an agent for the Sisters of Charity checking on adoptees. Mr. Luc had little reason to doubt that he was a natural-born son because he and his brother, Laurence, looked alike, the assumption echoing the desire of the agency to place children with families whom they resembled. He was treated like all the other children, and they never thought of him as "adopted." As a matter of fact, his parents and relatives of their generation were the only ones



Young boys ready for the trip westward  
with their chaperones

who knew for sure whether he was adopted or not.

He attended elementary school at Rip, and after grade school he went to work at LeBlanc Grocery Store where he learned to be a butcher. He ran the butcher shops in several stores in Bay Saint Louis and moved on to New Orleans. He first married Catherine Pagano and had two children. He later married Marie Carver Necaise and had one child.

As is true with any segment of society, some of the children who rode the Orphan Train to new homes in the West were true orphans; some were not. Some were “street” children; some were not. Some became good citizens; some did not. Fortunately, the ones who arrived in Bay Saint Louis over one hundred years ago became honest, hard-working citizens who contributed to the rich fabric

of the history of Bay Saint Louis in particular and the Gulf Coast in general.

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## An Interrupted Baptismal Ceremony

By

S. G. Thigpen

[In his book, *Work and Play in Grandpa’s Day*, S. G. Thigpen introduces the reader to a young boy named Danny Marison, who lived in the Gainesville area in the mid-1800s. The stories were related to Thigpen by the daughter of Danny Marison. With minimal editing this sketch recounts one of Danny’s adventures.]

“During the hot summer of 1870, Danny and two neighbor boys known as Joe and Jim spent many Sunday afternoons in a nearby swimming hole lolling about on the white sand bar on the shady side of the creek.

“Along in August of that year, a Baptist preacher had come to the community and held a series of revival services. There were several converts during the week-long services.

“As was customary, those who had joined the church were to be baptized on the following Sunday afternoon. The place chosen for the baptizing was the swimming hole where the boys usually spent their Sunday afternoons.

“Because of their regular visits there over a long period of time, the boys had come to consider the swimming hole as theirs. When they found out that the baptizing was to be at ‘their’ swimming hole and that the ceremony attendant on such rites



An old time river baptism

Nowadays full immersion baptisms are held within the church in a baptistry.

would consume the greater part of the afternoon and thus deprive them of their weekly outing, they resented it.

“Sunday morning Danny heard his father and the preacher talking about it. He hastened to find the other boys and tell them that they could not have their usual pleasant outing that afternoon.

“While they were expressing their displeasure at having to miss their outing in the afternoon, Jim said, ‘If we can’t have fun going in swimming, let’s have fun some other way.’ This suggestion set off a search in the mind of each of the boys for something they could do to spend a pleasant Sunday afternoon. Since they strongly resented having to give up the use of the swimming hole at the only time of the week they were free to enjoy it, the suggestion that they do something to avenge what they considered the wrong

they suffered, met with hearty agreement of all three.

“After considering several suggestions, one of the boys said, ‘Let’s tie a rope down under the water so that when they march out to be baptized, they’ll trip over it and all fall into the water.

“Danny hurried over to his house and went out into the ox lot and coiled a long rope, used in logging, into a tight coil so it would be less noticeable and easier to hide while they made their way to the swimming hole.

“They had to hurry as it would not be long before people would begin arriving to witness the baptismal ceremony. To be baptized, the converts had to march out in a line into the water, accompanied by the preacher who was to do the baptizing, until the water was about waist deep.

“The boys fastened one end of the rope to a big root about two feet under water on the far side of the stream from the sand bar from which they would wade in. The stream curved at this point. They drew the rope from this root across where the people would wade in and tied the other end to a sunken log, also about two feet under water.

“They barely got through with their preparations before the people began to arrive. When all the congregation had assembled on the creek bank, there was a preliminary singing service and a prayer by the preacher. The preacher and the candidates for baptism began their march into the water. The water deepened gradually as is characteristic of a sand bar.

“The preacher walked abreast with a big, fat boy and a tall girl. These three reached the rope at the same time and went headfirst into the water. The others were so close by that before they could realize what was happening, they had all fallen forward over the rope into about four feet of water.

“Not comprehending what had happened, several men watching on the bank of the creek rushed in to help. They also tumbled headfirst into the water. At this point, one of the men reached down and pulled the rope up out of the water where all could see it. Pulling the rope out of the way, they went on with the baptismal rites.

“At first there was puzzlement, followed by frustration, but by the time the ceremony

was over, there was anger and indignation at the perpetrators of this sacrilegious act.

“The boys had been watching in high glee from a clump of bushes a short distance away. When they saw the temper of the church group, they hurriedly stole away to their homes, for they did not think they would be safe if found nearby.

“The ownership of the rope was traced to Danny’s father. Later in the day when Danny was confronted by his father and some of the other men, he acknowledged that he was the one who had played the trick, taking all the blame and not informing on the others. He took the punishment, which was a thorough whipping with a stout hickory switch.”

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**December 3, 2015**  
(Need not be present to win)

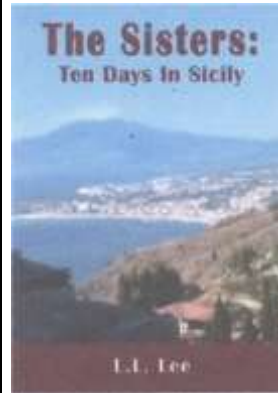
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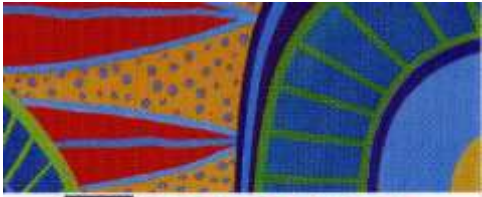
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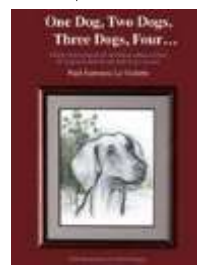
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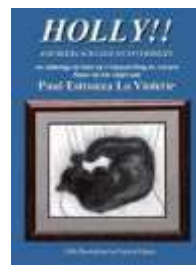
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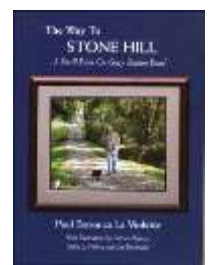
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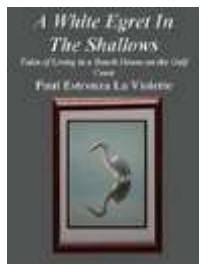
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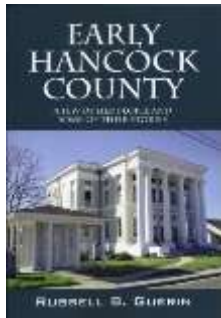


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Charles B. Benvenuti, CPA, PA  
 831 Highway 90  
 P.O. Box 2639  
 Bay St. Louis, MS  
 39521-2639

228-467-1402  
 Fax 228-467-2594  
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