

THE

# HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

September 2016

## COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, September 15, 2016, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Guest speaker for the program will be Shawn Prychitko and Anita Warner who will discuss the live oak tree registration program co-sponsored by the Hancock County Historical Society and the Bay-Waveland Garden Club. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 467-4090. **Respectfully we must request that you please call by noon on Wednesday, September 14, 2016**, 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 lunch is \$12.00.

## CEMETERY TOUR

Halloween looms! It's time to make final plans for the Hancock County Historical Society's 23rd Annual Cemetery Tour. It will be held on Halloween night, Monday, **October 31, 2016**, at Cedar Rest Cemetery on Second Street. We will need members to volunteer to prepare the cemetery for the tour (mark the path, etc.), to portray citizens buried there, to act as guides, and to serve at the Lobrano House. To volunteer, please call the Society at 467-4090.



## The Kings Daughters and Sons Emergency Hospital

By  
James Keating, M.D.

During the 1920s Hancock County, like most other counties in rural Mississippi, experienced rampant poverty. The average annual income in Mississippi in 1925 was approximately \$150. Farming was mostly hard-scrabble, and the piney forests were depleted, diminishing employment in the timber and turpentine industries. There were no hospitals in Hancock County. Poor patients who could travel were treated at Charity Hospital in

New Orleans or in Gulfport. Historically, most patients, rich or poor, were usually treated at home by dedicated general practitioners who made house calls. Doctors were often paid by a barter system with produce, chickens, or whiskey. They delivered babies in the mother's bedroom and performed surgery on the kitchen table with remarkable success.

In 1886 an American columnist who lived in New York City, Margaret McDonald Bottome (1827-1906), formed a group of ten women into a non-denominational Christian philanthropic organization called the Order of the Kings Daughters and Sons. They chose the silver Maltese cross as their distinctive badge and the motto, "not to be ministered, but to minister." The ladies began nurs-

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**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.”

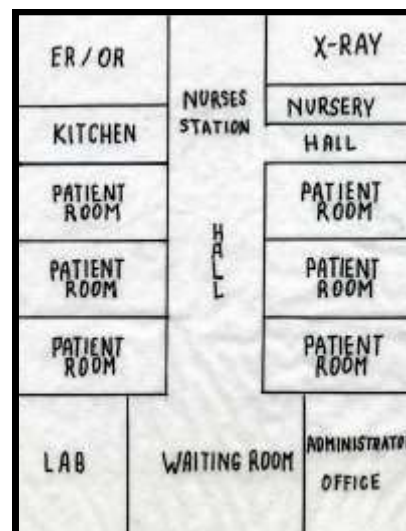
ing and visiting the sick while providing food, clothing, and medicine to the needy. The idea caught on and other small, local groups all over the country and even overseas were established. In twenty years membership in the order swelled to over 500,000 souls, and the name became The International Order of the Kings Daughters and Sons. By the early 20th century individual groups or “circles” enlarged the mission to include establishing hospitals, libraries, scholarship funds, and other charitable missions. Hospitals in Mississippi were established in Gulfport, Greenville, Yazoo City, and Brookhaven.

In 1927 the Bay St. Louis “circle” of the Kings Daughters and Sons was organized, and Mrs. A.F. Fournier was elected the first president. After a year of giving help and charity to the poor, it was decided to establish an emergency hospital in Bay St. Louis. Dr. D. H. (Holden) Ward, a local general practitioner, donated the upper story of his home, free of expense, to be used as a hospital, and the project was started. The hospital soon outgrew this first location, and another house was rented on Main Street. Later, the permanent site at 128 Carroll Avenue was purchased. The building was previously the home of a local jeweler and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Otto Sange. The ladies of the circle financed the project with private donations and various fund-raising events such as showers to collect towels, pillowcases, blankets, and clothing.

The house on Carroll Avenue, now called the Kings Daughters and Sons Emergency Hospital (KDSEH), was a typical, historic, small, raised, wood-framed cottage with a central hall. It had front and back porches and measured approximately 60x85 feet supporting a metal roof. A layout demonstrates

a waiting room, lab, and administrator’s office in the front of the building. In the center were multiple patient rooms on either side of the central hall. A nursing station was located in the rear as well as the nursery, kitchen, X-ray, and ER/OR suite. The rooms had white metal beds, and the walls were paneled with beaded board. A light bulb hung from the ceiling in every room.

A balance sheet from 1941 demonstrates an annual operating budget of \$4,753.20. Expenses for the year included groceries (\$1,318.75), surgical supplies (\$459.49), wages (\$407.00), expenses (\$333.85), operating expenses—phone, light, gas, etc.—(\$740.80), equipment (\$19.92), and nursing (\$1,557.75). Amazingly, the Kings Daughters and Sons circle made the last payment on the building in 1941 principally funded by public subscriptions, bequests, and philanthropic donations. Nevertheless, by 1957 the annual budget had grown to approximately



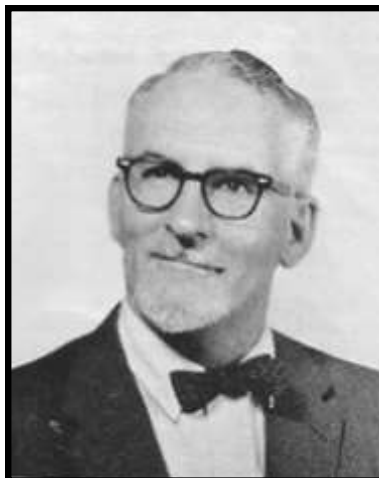
This rendering shows the layout of the Kings Daughters Hospital at 128 Carroll Ave. It’s quite easy to understand the hospital was originally intended for emergency use because of the small size of the facility and the few patient rooms.

\$30,000, and the need for significantly greater public support was becoming more apparent.

In this era throughout America, hospitals were evolving from private charitable guesthouses established by religious and secular orders taking care of the chronically ill, deprived, and disabled to modern, scientific, complex, medical care centers utilizing x-ray and laboratory facilities. By this time, a profession of well-trained nurses had been educated who were able to provide high quality, expert medical care utilizing recent advances in science and technology. Hospital emergency rooms and operating suites became the safest and most convenient places to perform surgery and deliver babies.

In time, a board of directors of local prominent citizens was established representing an oversight authority for the hospital. A head nurse acted as the administrator. Mrs. E. E. Craft held this post in the early years, but in 1943 Myrtle Santa Cruz took over this position. Myrtle was born in Biloxi and did her training at the Kings Daughters and Sons Hospital in Gulfport. After graduation she worked at that institution and was quickly promoted to a supervisory position, head of nursing. She ran KDSEH in Bay St. Louis until its closing in 1957. Afterwards, she purchased the Reed Hotel and managed it as a nursing home until 1982.

Dr. Marion J. Wolfe was chief of staff at the hospital throughout most of its existence. Dr. Wolfe graduated from Saint Stanislaus College in 1923 and Tulane Medical School in 1932. He opened his practice of general medicine and surgery in Bay St. Louis in 1933 and lived in a red brick house which contained his office down the street from the hospital. He made house calls all over the



Dr. Marion J. Wolfe

county. He prided himself as a surgeon and performed many operations in the hospital. He also performed operative procedures, if necessary or convenient, on the kitchen table in rural farmhouses. In fact, according to his son, Bernie Wolfe, his father often wondered why he had less post op complications such as infection under such primitive conditions than what he experienced with patients operated on in the hospital. One should re-



This is the way many people in town remember Dr. Wolfe, wearing a plaid French chapeau, carrying a walking cane, and sporting a moustache and goatee.

member our village could not acquire antibiotics like penicillin until after World War II. His patients were often too poor to pay his bills with money. One night a patient showed up at the front door with a bag of potatoes after receiving his bill. Bernie remembers his mother once exclaimed at the dinner table after one such payment, "Marion, how do you expect me to pay the bills with two dead chickens?"

Dr. Wolfe had a brilliant mind and a photographic memory. He was known to townspeople as sporting a mustache and a goatee, wearing a plaid French chapeau and carrying a walking cane not used for walking so much as for pointing things out while he was talking. He donated his centrifuge and microscope to the hospital so it could have a decent laboratory. He and an associate, Edith Ballard, started the first blood bank in town at the end of World War II. One night, after a motor vehicle accident involving a motorcycle and an eighteen wheeler, two patients arrived at the hospital in critical condition. Dr. Wolfe and the staff conducted two operations simultaneously in the X-ray room and the OR/ER suite with a family member holding a flashlight for additional illumination. One patient in town still tells the story about himself as a young man regarding a bad leg infection. He was evaluated and treated in Memphis, Birmingham, and Atlanta with no success. An amputation seemed like the only recourse for a cure to avoid death. In desperation, the patient returned home and consulted Dr. Wolfe. A treatment of an oatmeal poultice was implemented to the abscess in his groin. Over the next few weeks, the oatmeal drained the poison, and the lad's leg was saved.

Dr. Leroy McFarland practiced at KDSEH in the 1950s also.

As a general practitioner he delivered many babies in the hospital and at the mother's home. During an interview with the author conducted at the Veterans Nursing Home in Biloxi, he explained why he kept a lot of newspapers in the trunk of his car. This was for use in home deliveries so the considerable amniotic fluid spilled would not ruin what might be the only good bed in the farmer's house. He complimented the skill of the nursing staff of that period. One night a newborn baby in the nursery went into acute respiratory distress, and the night nurse successfully performed a tracheotomy before Dr. McFarland could get to the hospital, saving the child's life. In the 1950s a very experienced midwife named Carmen Labat performed over five thousand deliveries in Hancock County. If a delivery was not going well, she knew just when to consult Dr. McFarland or one of the other physicians so the patient could be delivered at the hospital.

Dr. McFarland went on later in his career to run the Emergency Department at Gulfport Memorial Hospital for many years.

Dr. Andrew Martinolich had a general practice in Bay St. Louis in the 1950s. He met his wife Carol at KDSEH when she was a nurse working the night shift. Dr. Martinolich reported that he was a patient at the hospital in his youth and Dr. Eldridge performed an appendectomy on him. Other physicians who practiced at KDSEH included Dr. A. P. Smith, Dr. Frank Schmidt, and Dr. Bert Quigley.

The hospital survived until July 14, 1957. By that time, there were ten nurses and five doctors on staff. There was some financial assistance from the county and the city, but expenses were beginning to far exceed revenue and donations. Although the hospital provided care

for the poor, the general public now also utilized its services. Many of the citizens today in the community from all walks of life were born in KDSEH.

In 1947 the United States Congress passed the Hill-Burton Act which offered support and incentives such as financial aid for the establishment of community hospitals all across the nation. The Hancock County Board of Supervisors under the able leadership of Manny Hubbard persuaded the voters to approve a bond issue to build a new, modern hospital on Dunbar Avenue. The county took over KDSEH until the new facility called Hancock Medical Center opened in 1960 at a total initial cost of \$560,000. KDSEH was the vehicle that achieved the transition in Hancock County from a limited, relatively primitive health care infrastructure in the 1920s to a more modern, state of the art public general hospital in 1960 worthy of the 20th century American dream.

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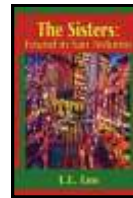
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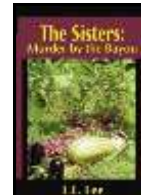
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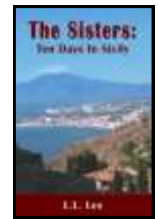
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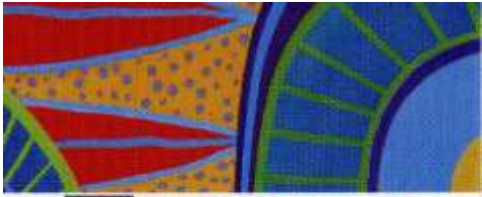
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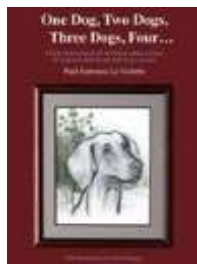
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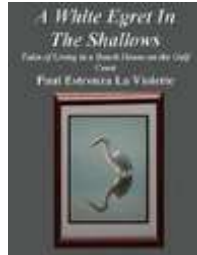
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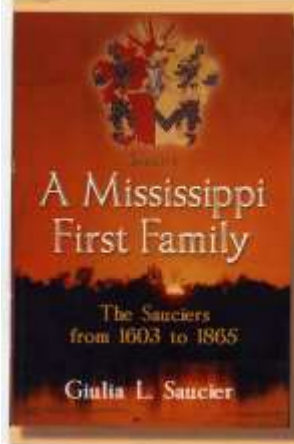
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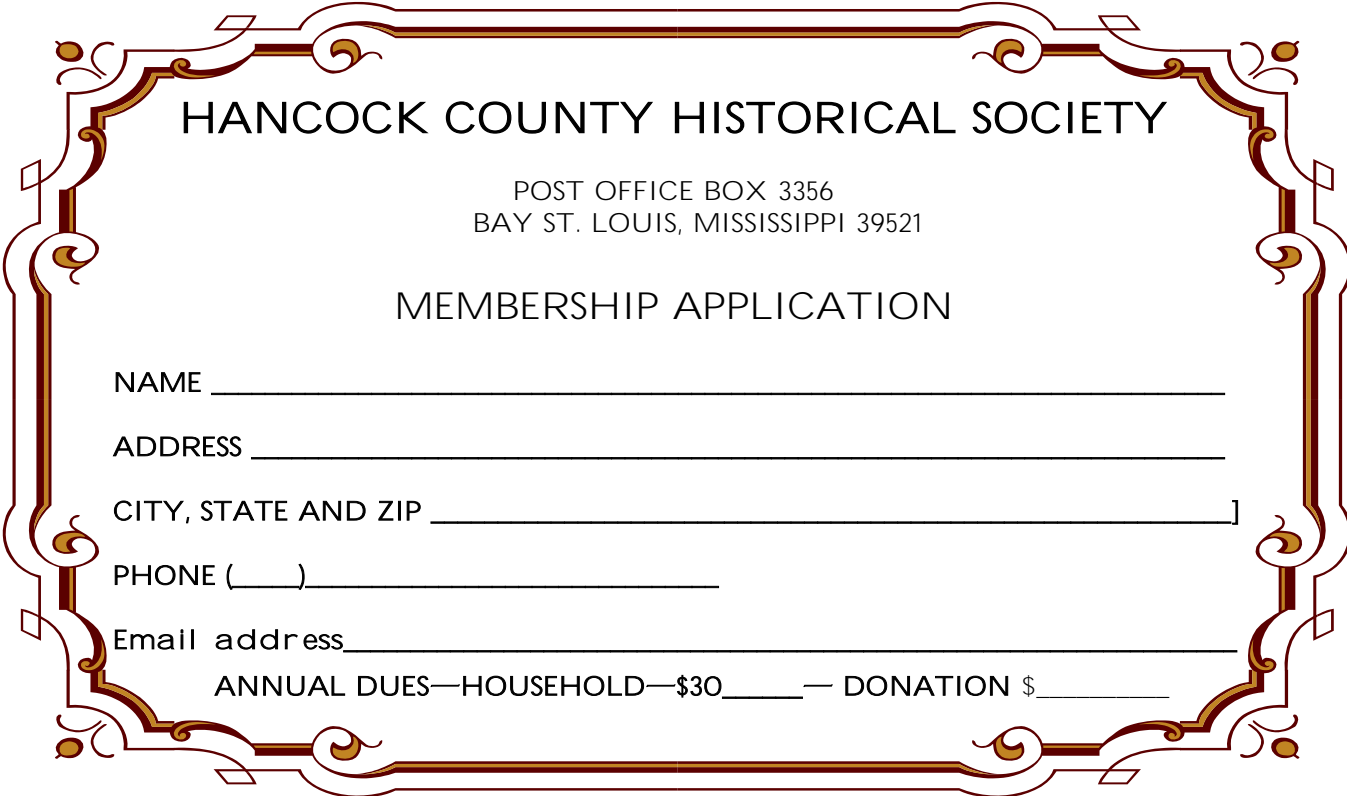
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