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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

Mississippi's Bicentennial
1817—2017

October 2017

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

“Not hear it?—yes, I hear it, and *have* heard it. Long—long—long—many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it—yet I dared not—oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am!—I dared not—I *dared* not speak! *We have put her living in the tomb!* Said I not that my senses were acute? I *now* tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them—many, many days ago—yet I dared not— I *dared not speak!* “The Fall of the House of Usher” by Edgar Allan Poe



Please join us for the 23rd Annual Cemetery Tour on Tuesday, October 31, 2017, at Cedar Rest Cemetery in Bay Saint Louis. The fun begins at 5:30 P.M. and continues until 8:00 P. M. Admission is free, but donations are graciously accepted. After the tour everyone is invited to the Lobrano House around the corner from the cemetery at 108 Cue St. for hot dogs, punch, cookies, and other treats. As usual, we will not have a luncheon in October so that we may devote all of our energies to the Cemetery Tour.



Hines Lumber Company Logging Train

LUMBER BARONS OF HANCOCK COUNTY

By
James Keating, MD

Timber was the most important natural resource in Hancock County during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The county was covered with vast, virgin pine forests. The long leaf yellow southern or heart pine produced wood that had great natural beauty, was hard, possessed great tensile strength, and resisted decay. Early settlers harvested these large, virgin trees often with a

trunk width of over three feet. They produced firewood, charcoal, simple lumber products, and naval stores (turpentine, tar, pitch) for sale in New Orleans. The invention of the steam engine driven circular saw and the railroads transformed this primitive industry during what is considered its pioneer phase (1840—1890). Accordingly, a boom period followed which is also known as the era of large sawmills (1890—1930) As the timber in the northern forests in Maine and the Great Lakes region became exhausted, extremely capable entrepreneurs, sometimes known as tycoons, were attracted to the potential bonanza in the forests of Hancock County. Their entrepreneurial

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Marianne Pluim, Webmaster**LOBRANO HOUSE
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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.”

expertise and ability to amass unlimited capital investment were necessary ingredients to build large, successful companies in Pearlington, Logtown, and the Kiln. Three of these “lumber barons” were Capt. John W. Poitevant, Henry Weston, and Edward Hines who played major roles in this compelling story in our economic history.

JOHN POITEVENT

The Poitevant family has been in the lumber business in Hancock County, Mississippi, and St. Tammany and Washington Parishes in Louisiana, for several generations. Bill Poitevant migrated to Hancock County from North Carolina in 1829. He married Mary Russ who came from Pearlington and they moved to Logtown where they built a beautiful house and bore five children.

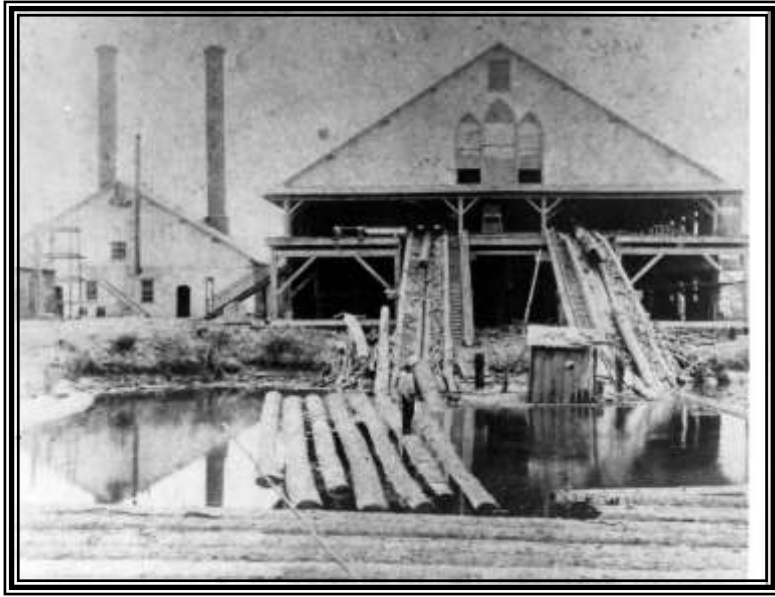
One son, John W. Poitevent (1840—1899), organized the Poitevent and Favre Lumber Company (P & F) after the Civil

War with his brother in law, Joseph Favre. John shared his father’s passion for riverboats and acquired his license as a pilot and master at a young age. He enlisted in the Confederate States Navy and was given command of the gunboat *Carondelet* on Lake Pontchartrain. He fought in the naval battles of Fort Jackson and Fort St. Philip on the Mississippi River in 1862. Thereafter, he was known as Captain John Poitevent. He was married three times to Emily Isabelle Toomer, Mary Handsboro, and Anna Marie Cenas and had nine children. His lumber business was so successful that he acquired later in life the nickname of “The Lumber King of the South.” He maintained residences in Pearlington and New Orleans where he was beloved socially and greatly esteemed by the business community. He actually was the King of Carnival (Rex) during Mardi Gras in New Orleans in 1893, and he was invited to join the exclusive Pickwick Club.



John Poitevent

John Poitevent, along with Joseph Favre, was owner of the Poitevent and Favre Lumber Company in Pearlington, MS.



Poitevent & Favre Lumber Company at Pearlington

Poitevent's small Pearlington mill was successful, and by 1870 had a lumber production of twenty million board feet per year. The mill employed 155 mostly black workers. The original Poitevent fortune amassed by his father, Bill Poitevent, was made principally by shipping schooners loaded with firewood and lumber products from his small mill in Logtown. Like his father, Captain

John Poitevent maintained a small fleet of eighteen schooners, a tugboat, and a steamer that exported his lumber products to ports in the Caribbean, South America, and New Orleans. The Poitevents learned early on the economic principal of supply chain management that the profits from transport of their freight could be as lucrative as the manufacture of the actual lumber products themselves. By 1884 the

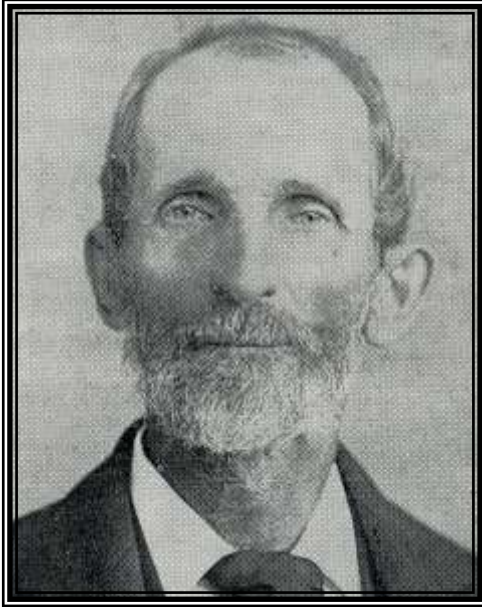
company had exhausted all the available timber on the lands owned in Hancock County. Captain Poitevent then bought eighty-five thousand acres of forest in St. Tammany and Washington Parishes in Louisiana. He constructed a short line standard gage railroad known as the East Louisiana Railroad from Mandeville to the Pearl River. As many as one thousand logs per day were then transported to the Pearl River to be floated to the Pearlington mill.

Captain John Poitevent died in 1899 of Bright's disease. Subsequently, his associate, John Favre, sold the business to Frank Hayne who was one of the wealthiest men in America, reputedly worth \$100 million. In 1904 Hayne cornered the cotton market. He lived for a time in Pearlington, but soon left operation of the sawmill to his brothers-in-law and lived in New Orleans and New York City. Hayne moved the whole operation to Mandeville and shut down the mill in Pearlington in 1904. The town of Pearlington which had evolved during the 19th century as a major commercial center and port in Hancock County with an estimated population of 1700 began a steep, irreversible decline after the loss of this important business. Captain John Poitevent is buried in the Pearlington Cemetery.



The Poitevent and Favre Lumber Company locomotive





Henry Weston

Henry Weston was the original head of the H. Weston Lumber Company in Logtown, MS.

HENRY WESTON

Henry Weston (1823—1912) was born in Skowhegan, Maine, to an old New England lumbering family. He learned his trade from his father. In 1847 Henry migrated to Hancock County because the forests of Maine were depleted of lumber. The south Mississippi virgin yellow pine forests offered a compelling opportunity for a young, ambitious entrepreneur to make his fortune like his ancestors before him. Initially, he was employed by the small Wingate sawmill in Logtown in 1847 as a sawyer, which at that time was the most important job in a mill. In no time he was promoted to the position of manager of the whole forest/mill/shipping operation. Henry married Lois A. Mead (1839—1877) who was a native of Jordan River

(The Kiln). Henry and Lois bought the home of Colonel D. Wingate in Logtown and had nine children. Lois died in 1877. In 1897 Weston married Ellen Poitevent McAboy, a sibling of Captain John Poitevent. According to the Lafayette Genealogical Society, “Weston remained a simple, practical man even after his business

made him wealthy. He would wear a hat until it was in shambles. The family being ashamed of the hat would hide it or burn it to get him to buy another. He kept a milk cow and milked her himself long after he became a millionaire, in fact, until just before he died. He wore common, inexpensive clothes and would ridicule his sons for putting on airs and wearing fine clothes.” He also had a concern for the welfare of his mostly black skilled workers which was unusual for this time period.

In 1856 Weston bought out Colonel Wingate with the brothers Henry and W.W. Carre. This mill prospered except during the Civil War years when the economy of the Pearl River basin came to a standstill. Two major railroad lines, the L & N and the Southern, built in Hancock County between 1870 and 1884 transformed the timber business. Thus,



The photo at the right shows a panoramic view of the Weston Lumber Company in Logtown.



The H. Weston Lumber Company locomotive

Henry incorporated his business in 1888 as the H. Weston Lumber Company as a vehicle to amass sufficient capital for infrastructure investment and expansion of the operation to meet the seemingly insatiable global marketplace demand for long leaf yellow pine products. Weston bought two million acres of timber forest in Mississippi, Louisiana, Mexico, Oregon, and British Columbia. He built short line railroads to Picayune, Ainsly, and Caesar. The railroad to Caesar carried both passengers and freight. In this period Weston had in Caesar three logging camps, a mule camp, an ox camp, and a skidder camp. Caesar boasted more business activity at this time than the new town of Picayune.

Henry Weston died in 1912 and is buried in the Logtown cemetery. The timber in the Pearl River area was exhausted by 1930 when his sons Horatio Stephen and John Henry Weston closed the mill. Approximately 150,000 acres of land were sold to the International Paper Company. Logtown was a one company town. The company owned the commis-

sary, the power station, the ice house, the livery stable, the telephone company, the local short line railroads, and the roads. It maintained a fleet of boats, piers, and wharves to handle the movement of logs. This company was a self-sufficient operation with much of the supplies it required shipped from New Orleans. After the mill closed, Logtown rapidly diminished from a estimated population of 2500 to that of a small, sleepy village. Now Logtown is just a memory; only the cemetery remains.

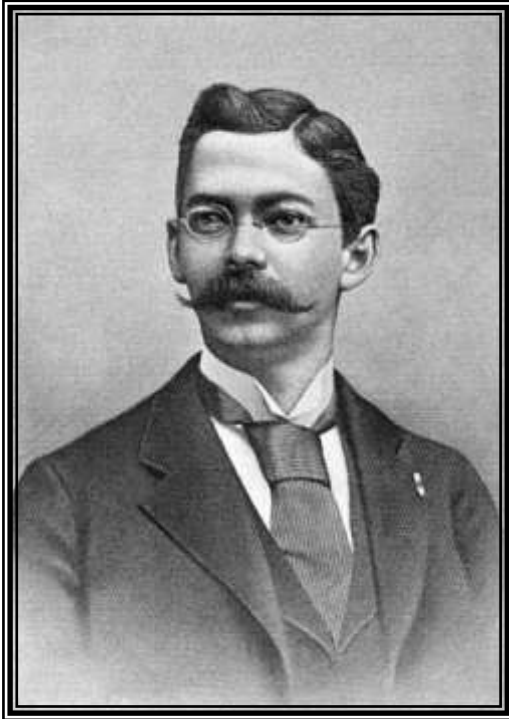


EDWARD HINES

Edward Hines (1863—1931) was born in Buffalo, New York, to an Irish immigrant family. His family moved to Chicago where he found work at age fourteen in the lumber business. He was an energetic, dapper young man who started his own business in 1892, the Edward Hines Lumber Company. His qualities of innovative merchandising, aggressive salesmanship, and a propensity for operating on an ever expanding scale were the keys to his remarkable success. Edward mar-



This is a Weston Company coupon book that was to be used at the company store.



Edward Hines

Edward Hines was the owner of the Jordan River Lumber Company as well as other lumber companies throughout the United States.

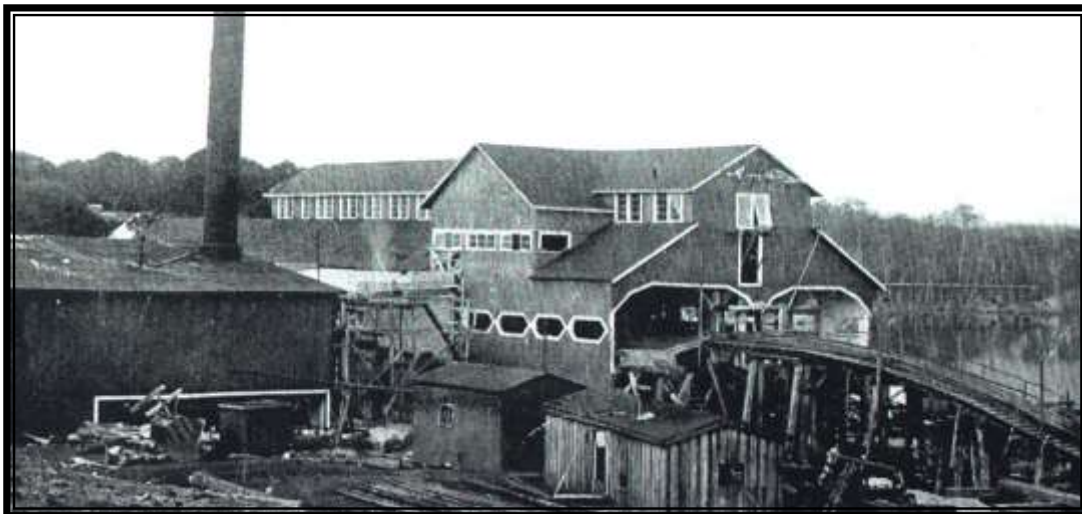
ried Loretta O'Dowd of Chicago in 1895, and they bore three sons and a daughter. By 1912 Hines owned several sawmills and extensive timberlands in Michigan and Canada. However, the supply of northern white pine became limited so Hines bought considerable tracts of southern yellow pine forests in southern Mississippi. In addition, he built a large mill in the Kiln called the Jordan River Lumber Company.

As a result, the town of Kiln (or The Kiln as it is locally referred to) witnessed dramatic growth with the building of this large mill. Two hundred millhouses were constructed for the new workers. To support the increased population a school was built. Other businesses began to establish themselves such as a company store, a fifty room hotel with a restaurant, a small hospital with round the clock physician

and nurse, a movie theater, and a drug store. In addition, there was a secondary school, several churches, a short line railroad, and a semi pro baseball team. For a time Kiln was the busiest town between Hattiesburg and New Orleans.

Twenty years later the forests of Hancock County were depleted. Hines and his family then decided to shift their operations to the Pacific Northwest. Edward Hines died of pneumonia in 1931 and was buried in Chicago. As a result the mill at Kiln closed down in 1933. Most of the workers moved away, and Kiln dwindled to a small village again. By the mid-1930's during the Depression, the Kiln became a virtual ghost town with no major industry. With the closing of the Jordan River Lumber Company, the sawmill era in Hancock County was over.

Poitevent, Weston, and Hines were the lumber barons of Hancock County who built large enterprises which produced prodigious amounts of lumber products ranging from thirty to sixty million board feet per year. The economic formula of that success re-



At left is a photo of the Jordan River Lumber Company in Kiln, MS which was owned by Edward Hines.

quired large tracts of cheap (\$2 per acre) timberland, an insatiable world market demand for lumber, and a wellspring or continuous supply of capital to finance these large sawmill operations. A large mill in 1900 might cost \$175,000 to build and require at least twenty thousand acres of virgin longleaf pine forest which might cost \$60,000. In addition, these investors knew they had only about twenty years to make their fortunes before their forests were depleted. Nevertheless, Henry Weston once remarked that he could "make more money than smoke in this trade," and he did. These capitalists and their counterparts during this period made the United States the foremost economy in the 20th century and ultimately enabled our present day standard of living. In essence, it was the "Gilded Age" described by Mark Twain.

In the hey-day of the timber boom years, the lumber barons ran the company stores, established banks, and constructed short line railroads all over the country. Approximately sixty-five percent of the inhabitants of Hancock County in the early 20th century depended economically one way or another on this industry. The forest industry transformed the economy and the social order as well as the way of life for most people. The settlers of the original pioneer society who had grown up principally on farms preferred jobs as loggers or sawmill workers. Most of these workers were black. The P & F was the first company on the Pearl River to employ black captains and engineers on their schooners

and steamboats. Black workers also found employment as sawyers, contractors, and stevedores. The new life in the mill towns offered benefits of improved health standards, education, and better living conditions. On the other hand, the free self-sufficient life of the pioneer settlers was gone. With the disappearance of the forests, the deer and other wild game migrated to "greener pastures." For those who remained on small farms, citizens now produced crops for sale in local markets.

In a forthcoming article, the timber industry in Hancock County after 1930 in the rest of the 20th century up to the present time will be described. The forests would be replanted with new pine trees and a few large paper mills would replace the sawmills.

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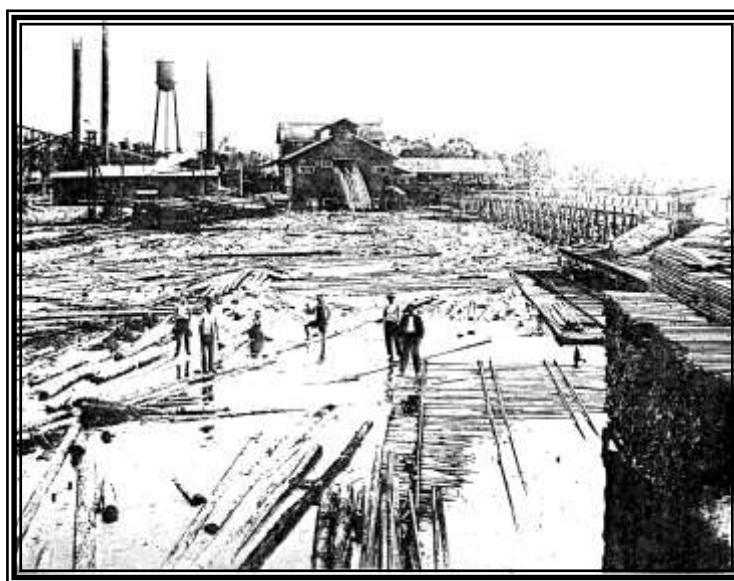
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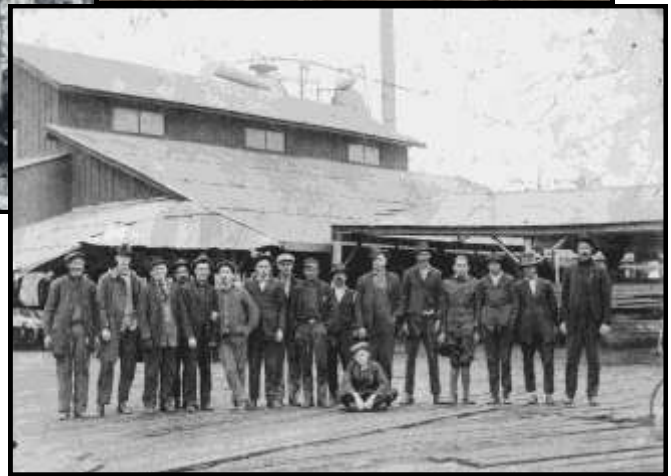
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This photo shows an area of the Jordon River Lumber Company.

MORE LOGGING PHOTOS



TOP LEFE: Logging with a team of oxen
TOP RIGHT: Loggers at work
MIDDLE LEFT: Logging train
MIDDLE RIGHT: Lumbermen who worked at the Weston Mill
BOTTOM LEFT: Westin Lumber Village

BOARD ELECTIONS

It is time to elect board members to serve from January 2018 through December 2019. Final selections will be made in elections at the November meeting.

Our nominating committee will submit its recommendations, but we are also asking the general membership for nominations. If you would like to serve or recommend someone, please call 467-4090 or nominate from the floor at the November meeting. The offices being filled this year are president, second vice president, publicity chairman, and historian. The current secretary, Lana Noonan, has resigned, and we need someone to serve her second year. Thank you to those who served on the board during these past two years.

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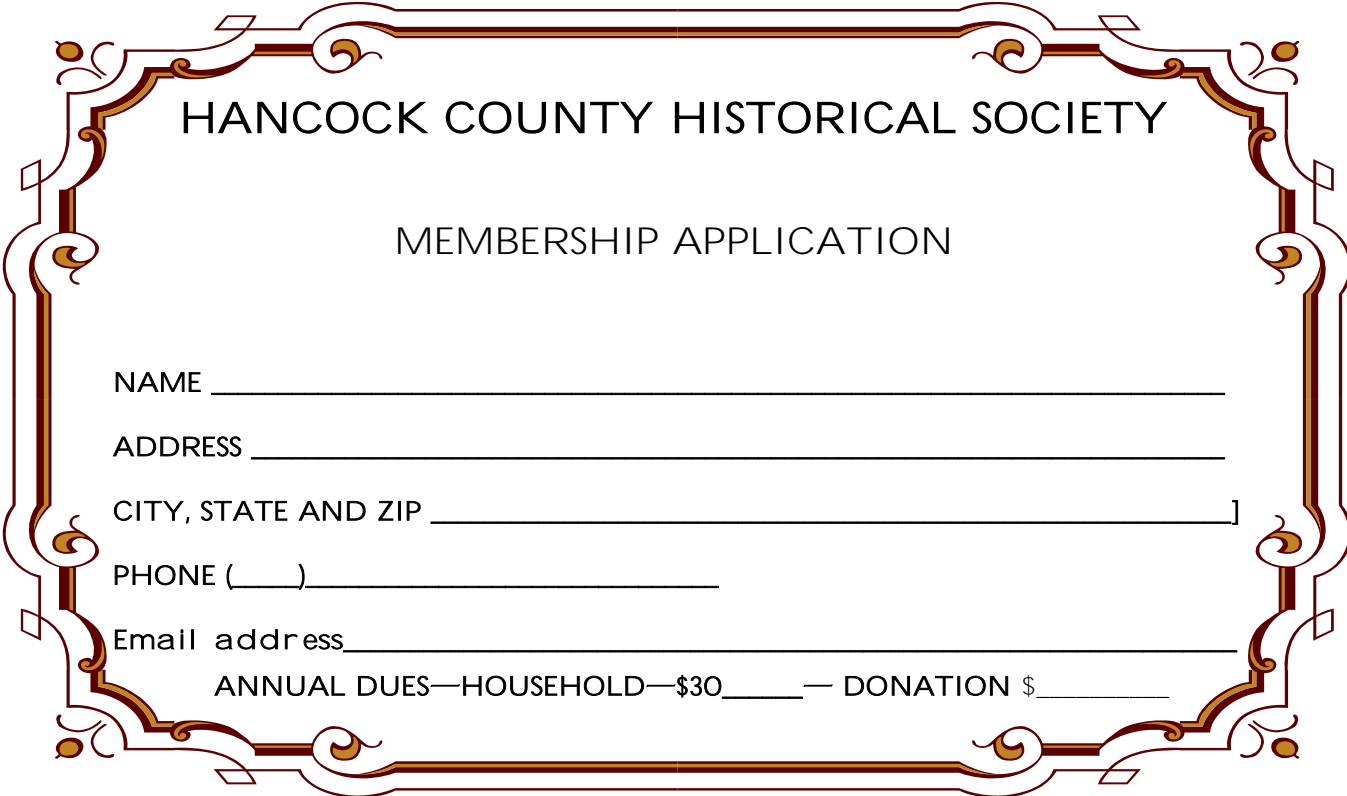
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