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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

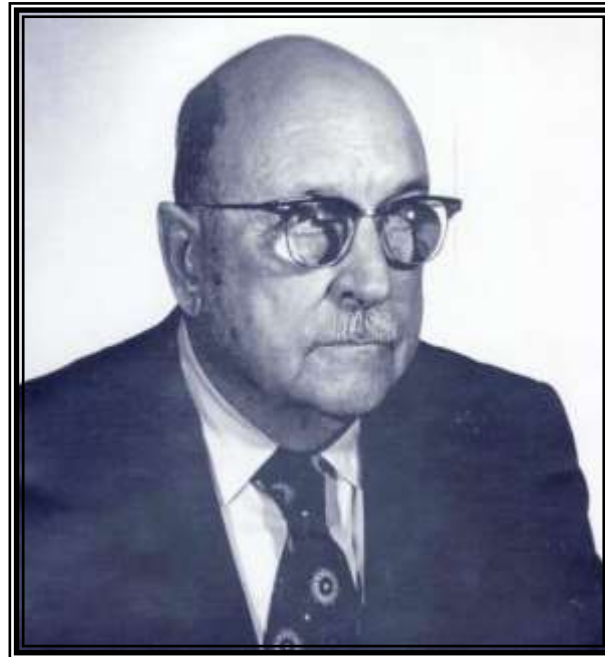
August 2019

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, August 15, 2019, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. The speaker will be Mattie Codling, Director of Exhibits and Preservation at the Walter Anderson Museum in Ocean Springs. She will speak on the influence of New Orleans art on Bay St. Louis. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 467-4090. **Respectfully we must request that you please call by noon on Wednesday, August 14**, to make your reservation in order to help us plan seating which is limited to fifty-four people and to apprise us of the number of lunches to order. **Lunch is \$14.00 for members and \$15.00 for non-members**, payable at the door. It is catered by Almost Home Catering, Michelle Nichols, chef. The lunch menu is chicken and sausage jambalaya, vegetable medley, garden salad, garlic knots, and triple chocolate brownies.

ANNUAL CEMETERY TOUR

The 25nd Annual Cemetery Tour will be held on Halloween night, Thursday, October 31, 2019. Needed are volunteers to prepare the cemetery for the tour, to portray citizens buried there, and to act as guides. To volunteer, please call 228-467-4090. All actors and guides must be members of the Historical Society.



Norton Haas
(1909-1985)

He was the adopted son of Albert and Virginia McLeod.

The McLeods owned a sawmill with several related mills on their property and a general store as well. McLeod Water Park on the Jourdan River is located on land they owned.

History of the Kiln (1933—2019)

By
James Keating, M. D.

The economy of Hancock County and the Kiln was mostly agrarian in the first half of the twentieth century. To wit this typical Southern rural economy was principally composed of timber, cattle breeding, dairying, and farming. Furthermore the introduction of electricity, state financed roads and bridges, motorized vehicles, and tractors had a very positive influence. However economic development achieved by large scale investment projects such as the Hancock County Port and Harbor Commission, NASA,

the Stennis International Airport, the interstate highway system, and finally the gaming industry were critical in stimulating the resurgence of the economy of the Kiln and Hancock County. Thus, the story of the Kiln and its rebound from the Depression to a modern, multifaceted prospering economy is in no small part about hard working core families with names such as Ladner, Favre, Ne-caise, Cuevas, McLeod, Crump, Haas, and Whitfield. Moreover many of these familiar family names have been recorded numerous times in the history of the Kiln for over two hundred years.

Farmers in the Kiln were poor during the Depression, but vegetable gardens, hunting, and local seafood kept local families from starving. Prohibition in Mississippi lasted from 1908 to 1966. Even so

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

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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.”

Kiln reputedly supported fifty kilns producing bootleg whiskey or moonshine during this time. Fortunately the Coast Electric Power Association was organized in 1938, and 150 miles of electric lines were completed with the objective of providing homes and farms in rural areas such as the Kiln with affordable electricity.

Albert John McLeod (1853-1931) and his wife, Virginia, affectionately known as “Aunt Gin,” moved to the Kiln in 1897. McLeod was a wealthy pioneer timber man whose family had made a fortune in this industry back in South Carolina. He was attracted to the timber forests of Hancock County because most of the timber had been cut back home. He established the McLeod Community next to the Kiln on the Jourdan River. In addition McLeod was a community activist and served as President of the Hancock County Board of Supervisors. One of his major achievements was the building of a road between Waveland and the Kiln now known as Highway 603. Unfortunately the county in that era did not have the resources for such a project. So McLeod decided to fund the project himself. He designed and built the Kiln Road in 1913 over what had originally been a mud road. Strikingly it became one of the best roads in the county.

Aunt Gin had a nephew named Norton Haas (1909-1985) who lost his mother at age one. Consequently Albert and Virginia adopted Norton. Norton attended St. Stanislaus College. Albert died in 1931, and Norton became the manager and operator of the family business. Equally important, Haas was a legendary community booster who also owned a lumber yard in Waveland. For example, he worked to get state improvements on County Road 603, later High-

way 603. It was eventually made into an all weather road with a right of way, and in 1950 it was paved with a hard surface. In 1957 the rest of Highway 603 above Kiln to Highway 53 was paved. Afterward in 1996 it was enlarged to be multilane. For his motivation and hard work in seeking improvements to the road, in 1996 it was officially designated the Norton Haas Memorial Highway.

Haas had a lengthy list of accomplishments during his lifetime. For example, Haas with a group of dedicated businessmen spent years conducting meetings, networking, and persuading the citizens of the county of the need for a hospital and an industrial park. Haas and H. Hardin Shattuck, manager of the Coast Electric Company, performed most of the legwork in moving the project from the “thinking and talking” stage into actuality. That said Haas presented a petition from the Bay St. Louis Jaycees to the county supervisors in 1963 to act on a state bill that authorized Hancock County to build, own, and operate an industrial park and maritime harbor. Moreover, Haas served on the original Port and Harbor Commission representing Beat 3. He was also the first president of the Hancock County Hospital Board of Trustees. Haas supported the Rotary Club, United Way, Boy Scouts, and Knights of Columbus. As a result he was named Outstanding Citizen of the Year by the Hancock County Chamber of Commerce.

McLeod Park was created in 1975 with NASA donating the land from its buffer zone. The Pearl River Basin Development District built the park, and Hancock County built the roads and parking areas. Norton Haas was influential in this activity, and the park is named in memory of his aunt and



This photo of Holly Bluff Gardens comes from an old postcard.

uncle, Albert and Virginia McLeod. This jewel of a recreational park on the Jourdan River provides fishing, boating, hiking areas as well as a baseball field, picnic pavilion, and a playground area for families.

James Lyman Crump retired to the Kiln in 1942 after amassing a fortune as a cotton broker in New Orleans. Holly Bluff was the name of his log cabin lodge in Kiln. He created extensive gardens named for the great southern hollies that were native to his picturesque site on his Jourdan River bluff. When Crump opened his Holly Bluff Gardens to the public, visitors could walk along two miles of pathways under old oak, pine, cypress, dogwood, and gum trees. Exotic native and foreign shrubs and flowers were enjoyed by many visitors year round.

Crump was also a successful farmer of highland rice at Holly Bluff. He bought thirty-eight hundred acres along the Jourdan River and produced rice for fifteen years. Incidentally rice is still farmed today by other farmers along the Texas Flat Road. Included on this extensive acquisition of land were fertile grasslands and clover pastures. Accordingly in the 1950's he invested in a herd of Hereford and Brahma cattle. As a matter of fact

farmers have been successfully raising cattle for beef for profit in the Kiln for two hundred years.

About 1938 Emmett Lee Irwin, a New Orleans surgeon, bought a parcel of land along the south bank of the Jourdan River next to the Holly Bluff Gardens. Specifically his estate comprised six hundred acres of timberland. Furthermore Dr. Irwin created magnificent subtropical gardens named Darwood on the Jourdan which was also opened to the public. Camellias of many varieties as well as ardisia, hydrangeas, crape myrtles, mimosas, dogwoods, and lilies graced these gardens. Waterfalls, pioneer trails, picnic pavilions, and a small museum called Darwood House were available to visitors. Unfortunately Hurricane Camille in 1969 destroyed both Holly Bluff Gardens and Darwood on the Jourdan. Thus this area of the Kiln is still referred to as the Garden District.

In the nineteenth century education in rural Hancock County was provided by small local schools scattered throughout its various communities. In 1880 the Catholic Church with Father Smith as headmaster organized a school in the old church building. Shortly thereafter a public school was built

and opened in Bayou Talla. In 1903 the principal of this school was Theodore Bilbo, who later became governor of Mississippi and then a U.S. Senator. In 1918 the Kiln Consolidated School was formed. Next, students from Ne-caise, McLeod, Fenton, Silver Hill, and Bayou Talla attended classes in a new concrete block building with an attached gymnasium. Later in 1956, the students of the Kiln were transferred to the North Central High School on the Poplarville Highway between Kiln and Sellers. Incidentally the previously mentioned school building became the new Annunciation Catholic Church.

Samuel "Sam" Whitfield (1908-1979) was born in Logtown and witnessed the destruction of the virgin piney forests of Hancock County by the timber industry. Nevertheless he was one of the few local entrepreneurs who saw the potential for profit in cutting twenty-year-old pine trees in the regrowth scrub forests evolving in the cutover lands for sale as pulpwood to the paper mills. Thereby in 1937 he started the Sam Whitfield Tiber Company. He quickly became the main "wood dealer" in Hancock County for the International Paper Company and organized over two hundred white and black independent subcontractor loggers to deliver this timber to his concentration yard in Kiln. This yard was located next to the old Hines Mill site. Pulpwood was then loaded on barges on the Jourdan River and transported to the paper mill at Moss Point, MS. Hence this business became one of the largest companies in Hancock County.

The farmers of Kiln embraced dairy farming as a profitable business over the twentieth century. Electricity came to the

Kiln around 1940. In the 1940's refrigeration of milk products allowed more efficient supply chain management. Farmers like the Cuevas family and Samuel Favre in Kiln maintained herds of dairy cattle for good profit in the 1950's, but by 1977 most dairy farmers had gone out of business because of government regulation and financial problems. Today there are no dairy farmers in Hancock County. In 1958 the *Eagle* newspaper reported that the economic profile of the Kiln included first and foremost pulpwood, hardwood, beef cattle, dairy cattle followed by large truck farms and small gardens.

In 1990 the Mississippi Legislature passed the Mississippi Gaming Control Act to boost the state economy. As a result two dockside casinos opened in Hancock County—one in Bay St. Louis and one in Lakeshore. Thus the Kiln community enjoyed a big increase in population from 1,262 in 1990 to 2,040 in 2000.

In 1965 the Hancock County Port and Harbor Commission built a commercial airport and airpark at Kiln. A tract of land was purchased from L. O. Crosby, Jr., adjacent to the NASA Missile Test Facility buffer zone. For several decades the airport served only small private planes, and there were only a few tenants in the airpark. However in the twenty first century, the airport has attracted an emerging



Planes at Stennis Airport in
The Kiln

cluster of defense technology firms, and the U. S. Air Force and Navy are attracted to this hub for military training. In fact today government and U. S. Department of Defense activity represent more than fifty percent for the business at the airport. Nowadays the airpark is full of tenants, and new land for expansion has recently been purchased. Most important, Hancock County maintains a dominant role in the aerospace/aeronautic corridor that extends through the South.

The Kiln is evolving as a commercial center of gravity for the economy of Hancock County. It was for this reason that the Hancock County Port and Harbor Commission placed its new headquarters office at the airport. The Hancock Performing Center nearby is next to the Hancock High School. The county has a multipurpose arena and fairgrounds on the Kiln-Delisle Road for rodeos and state fairs. A large modern library is present on Highway 603. Light industry like the Lazy Magnolia Brewery and the Crittenden Distillery evoke memories of legendary days of moonshine kilns during prohibition.

The population of Kiln today is approximately twenty-eight hundred. The mean household income is about \$54,884. A profile of the occupation of its working citizens reflects the diverse character of its modern economy: retail trade 31%; health care and social assistance 15%; educational services 6%; accommodation and food services 19%; manufacturing 8%; finance and insurance 7%; information 3%; agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting 4%; and miscellaneous 7%.

In conclusion The Kiln is an agrarian community with a long history spanning two centuries that feature many familiar family names that are multigenerational who have con-

tributed significantly to its well being. Timber, beef cattle, and dairy farming were dominant sectors of the economy during the middle of the twentieth century. The twenty first century has witnessed the growth of population and prosperity. Indeed the economic forecast for the Kiln is that the town will continue to evolve as a commercial center because of the recreational benefits of the Jourdan River and the availability of high elevation farm and forest timberland for residential development through out the twenty first century.

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Spring Branch Cemetery

A volunteer group of people have worked the past several months to clean up the Spring Branch Cemetery in Hancock County. Storms and general neglect had left the cemetery

almost isolated unable to be visited. Vanessa Mitchell Polk discovered the area in great disrepair and realized that something needed to be done to show respect for all of the people who are buried there. She got in touch with friends, relatives and some Navy volunteers, and they have spent the better part of nine months to a year cleaning up the place. They have found gravestones, cut trees, cleaned away brush, and made controlled burns. However, even though their work shows vast improvement, there is still much work to be done. If you have someone buried in this

cemetery or even if you don't and would like to volunteer to help out, please get in touch with Vanessa . You may contact her by phone or email.

Phone: 228-216-3776
 Email: vanessa.a.polk@gmail.com

To see photos of progress at the cemetery, check the following facebook page:

facebook.com/SpringBranchCemebook.



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 25nd Annual Cemetery Tour will be held on Halloween night, Thursday, October 31, 2019. Needed are volunteers to prepare the cemetery for the tour, to portray citizens buried there, and to act as guides. To volunteer, please call 228-467-4090. All actors and guides must be members of the Historical Society.

PLEASE NOTE THAT WE HAVE RETURNED TO OUR ORIGINAL DAY OF PRESENTING THE CEMETERY TOUR: HALLOWEEN NIGHT.

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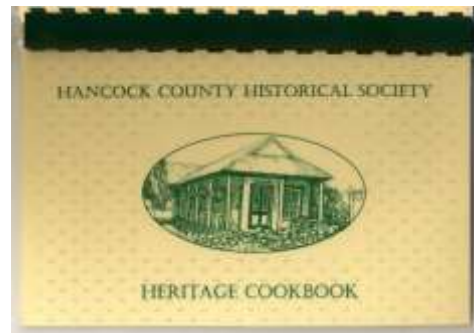
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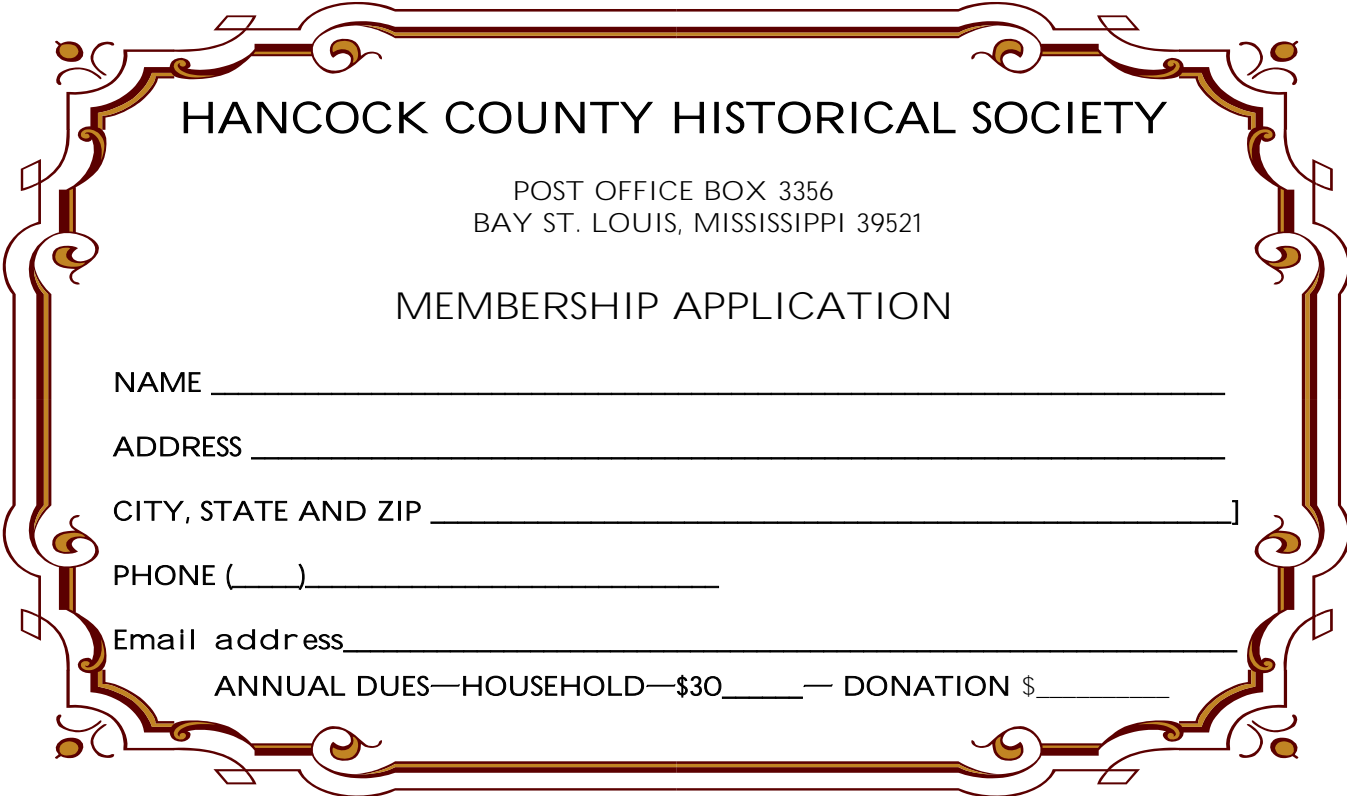
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