

THE

HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

September 2019

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, September 19, 2019, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. The speaker will be Thomas E. Simmons of Gulfport, the author of six books. Among them are *By Accident of Birth*, *The Man Called Brown Condor*, and *Escape from Archangel*. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 467-4090. **Respectfully we must request that you please call by noon on Wednesday, September 18**, 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 meatballs marinara over pasta, garlic green beans, Caesar salad, garlic knots, and banana split cake.

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.



Gainesville
School
c. 1890-
1900

PUBLIC EDUCATION IN HANCOCK COUNTY

By
Eddie Coleman

The system of public education which we enjoy today began in 1848 with the passage of a special act of the Mississippi Legislature. However, this act was limited to only four counties—Hinds, Jefferson, Wilkinson, and Amite. A later law established a superintendent of education for each county in the state. The first county superintendent of education in Hancock County was appointed in 1870 for a set term of two years. In 1890 this term was extended to four years. Even though early records of Shieldsborough show a school fund dating back to 1858, there is no record of free schools at that time. Of

course, St. Stanislaus College, St. Joseph Academy, and St. Rose de Lima as well as parochial elementary schools and municipal elementary and high schools existed in the mid-1800's in Bay St. Louis and Waveland. In addition a secular private school operated by a Mrs. Hawthorne existed in Pearlington. But the focus here is on the public county schools, not the parochial and city schools.

By the 1890's there were more than forty one-teacher schools, white and black, in the rural areas of the county. Evidence of some of these schools such as Dilville and Taylor now exists only in the memories of the elder citizens in the county, in the stories recounted to grandchildren, or in faded photographs lying in abandoned albums in the attic. Many of these schools were poorly maintained with meager facilities according to an interview with Mr. W. W. Stockstill conducted in March 1937 as part of the Works

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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.”

Progress Administration (WPA) program. Mr. Stockstill served as Hancock County Superintendent of Education from 1900-1908.

In the early years of education in Hancock County, small schools were established in the various communities throughout the county. Some people remember Gainesville, Turtle Skin, Dead Tiger, Gravel Pit, Catahoula, and Bagget schools. There was also a provision made for an Indian school in 1884 near the Indian settlement at Bayou LaCroix. This school operated as late as 1895.

In February 1937 Mr. John Craft, who served as Hancock County Superintendent of Education from 1908-1920, was interviewed by Edmond J. Giering, who worked on the WPA. Project. Much of the following information has been gleaned from that interview.

Mr. Craft considered the most outstanding achievement of his administration to be the consolidation of the county schools. Prior to 1908 there were no definite district lines for the various schools in the county, so the school board authorized that a new map be drawn and new districting be made of the schools. Pearl River and Harrison Counties had already reorganized and consolidated many of their schools along these lines, and to

keep pace with the rapidly developing educational activity in the state, Hancock County followed suit. At that time, the county school board was composed of Asa S. Weston of Logtown, Beat 1; Wiley Smith, Picayune, Beat 2; Price W. Lee, Caesar, Beat 3; W. A. Cuevas, Fenton, Beat 4; and George Hicks Edwards, Bay St. Louis, Beat 5. In addition to joining in the educational progress of the state, the most notable advantages of this reorganization were better health conditions, improved rural life activity, and more professionally trained rural teachers.

Consolidation brought better health conditions in the form of more comfortable school furniture and improved sanitary facilities with the installation of water coolers, individual drinking cups, and better toilet facilities. Improved rural life activity came in the form of a better knowledge of beautifying the school grounds as well as the introduction of conveniences in the home to make life in rural school communities more attractive. More professionally trained teachers came in the form of placing *some* educational requirements on teachers such as more professional education.

The chief objection to consolidation was, as usual, increased taxation, but the objection was

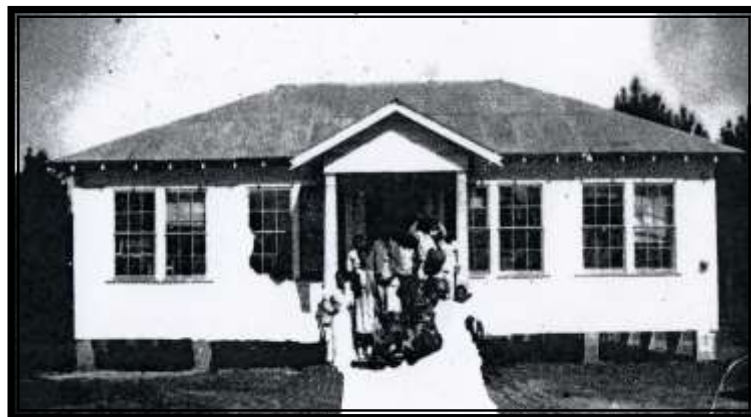


Clermont
Harbor School

c. 1911



Logtown School
c. 1890-1900



Jourdan River School
for African-American students 1924

overcome through the diligent efforts of the county superintendent and other interested citizens. The Sellers School was formed out of the Crane Creek, the Cap Ladnier, and parts of the Standard schools in the fall of 1914 and officially became the Sellers Consolidated School. In 1915, the Dedeaux Line School was formed out of Dedeaux, Sand Hill, Orphan Creek, and part of Standard. The Kiln Consolidated School, which embraced a large taxing unit, was formed from the Necaize, Fenton, McLeod, Silver Hill, and Bay Talla schools in 1916. With over four hundred students the first year, it was one of the largest consolidated schools in the state and was proclaimed by the state superintendent of education to be one of the outstanding units of consolidation. Two years later in 1918, the Lakeshore School was formed out of the Clermont Harbor, Ansley, and Lakeshore areas. By the end of 1919, the number of one-teacher schools in the county had been reduced by more than one-half.

In 1937 when the WPA Research Project was written, there were fifteen elementary schools in the county for the education of both black and white students. There

were also four consolidated high schools in Hancock County. At this time the practice of “Separate, but Equal” was prevalent throughout the state, and the high schools appear to have been limited to white students only. The schools located in Beat 1 were the Logtown School and the Gainesville School for white children and “The Point” in Pearlinton and the Gainesville Colored School for black children. All of these schools offered instruction through the eighth grade.

Aaron Academy is the only school listed in the WPA report as being in Beat 2 in 1937. It was a grammar school located at the intersection of Highways 11 and 90.

In Beat 3 there were two grammar schools, Leetown and Catahoula, and two high schools—Caesar High School and Kiln Vocational High School. Caesar, a line school located partially in Pearl River County and partially in Hancock County, offered classes from primary through twelfth grades. The Kiln Vocational High School was a senior high school with a curriculum offering home science, music, and athletics. Since it was a vocational high

school, agriculture students had an outside project such as raising a bale of cotton, an acre of corn, etc., in addition to regular class work.

Beat 4 boasted two high schools and four grammar schools for black children. The high

VOCATIONAL and LINE SCHOOLS

Vocational high schools were established in Mississippi in the early 20th century. In 1908 the Mississippi legislature provided matching funds for counties that hired teachers and erected classrooms and dormitories to instruct young Mississippians in agriculture and domestic science (home economics). As the state became less agricultural, some of these schools became local junior colleges which developed into present day community colleges.

A line school was one which was located between two counties. Because of population between the two counties, it was not feasible for each county to build its own high school so close between the two counties. At one time Hancock County had three line schools—one between Hancock and Pearl River counties and two between Hancock and Harrison counties.

schools were Sellers Vocational High School, located on the northern line between Harrison and Hancock Counties, and Dedeaux School, another consolidated vocational senior high school also situated on the Harrison and Hancock County line several miles south of the Sellers School. The schools for black children were the Fenton, Catahoula, Jourdan River, and Bagget Schools.

Edwardsville School, Gulfview School, and Clermont Harbor School were all found in Beat 5. Edwardsville School was situated on Bayou Choctaw; Gulfview School was located at Lakeshore one mile north of the seawall; and Clermont Harbor School sat halfway between the seawall and the railroad in Clermont Harbor.

With the decline of the virgin timber in Hancock County and the Depression in the 1930s, production at the lumber mills dropped considerably. Some of them changed their focus from lumber products to other related businesses such as kilns and pulpwood. For this reason many families moved, seeking jobs elsewhere. The drop in families meant a drop in school age children causing a decline in the need for so many schools in the

county system, and the high schools at Caesar, Kiln, Dedeaux, and Sellers closed. In the late 1950s a new high school—Hancock North Central—opened with its first graduating class in 1959. It was not until the building of the Stennis Spacer Center in the mid-1960s that the county population began to grow and the need for more county schools came. Today, the Hancock County School System consists of one large county high school and five elementary schools bringing the student population to 4,414.

Because of the changing demographics of Hancock County and consolidation of schools, many of these earlier schools closed and others opened. Even though they currently exist only in the old stories and legends handed down from parent to child, they have played a very important part in developing the character, vision, and aspirations of the citizens of Hancock County.

SOURCE:

Giering, Edmond J. "Schools of Hancock County, MS," *Works Progress Administration* Washington, DC: US Printing Office, 1937.
School population from the district office of the Hancock County School System.

The Gilmore Hotel

By
Eddie Coleman

The Gilmore Hotel stood at the corner of Keller Street and Railroad Avenue (currently Blaize Ave.) from the 1890's until the mid-1940's. Located across the street from the train depot, it offered lodgings as well as spirits and tobacco to boarders. The proprietor was James Gilmore Fayard, Sr. Information about the hotel and its history comes from family history, a couple of brief newspaper entries, and the Sanborn maps of 1893—1944.

Family oral history from a granddaughter of Mr. Fayard provides some information about the business. She reports that her grandfather owned the hotel circa 1900, that it was located near the railroad tracks, and that it supposedly burned down. She says that her father, James Gilmore Fayard, Jr., was born in 1904 and spent summers in Bay St. Louis until at least 1919, traveling by train from New Orleans. His father lived and worked in Bay St. Louis, and his mother, siblings, and he lived in New Orleans for the chil-



At the left is
Seller's High School
c. 1920s

At the right is
Kiln High School
c. 1920s





This is the Gilmore Hotel located across Railroad Street (Blaze Ave.) from the train depot.

dren to attend school and for his mother to have medical care.

The granddaughter is unsure whether the hotel burned while her grandfather owned it or not because there is another version of the family story. This rendering says that Mr. Fayard went bankrupt and lost the hotel when alcohol running ships could no longer transport liquor to it. This legend suggests that he had the hotel during Prohibition in the 1920's and that he lost it during that time.

In addition, information about Mr. Fayard and the hotel comes from two *Sea Coast Echo* articles, one dated May 20, 1893, and one dated October 7, 1893. The earlier entry reported that Mr. Fayard was the proprietor of the Railroad Exchange and kept "a quiet and orderly place," which he had had for four years. He sold various kinds of alcohol and tobacco products. Mr. Fayard was described as a "genial good fellow" who enforced the "rules of the house." This date gives evidence that he had been in business since 1889.

The later article in the *Echo* reported that Mr. Gilmore Fayard, the "live and wide-awake proprietor of the Railroad Exchange, had plans drawn for a magnificent saloon and hotel building to be erected in the rear of the railroad depot." However, the Gilmore Hotel was located *across*

the street from the depot. Is this the area described as "in the rear of the railroad depot"?

Further information comes from the Sanborn maps of Bay St. Louis. A building appears at the corner of Keller Street and Railroad Avenue from 1893 until 1944 as evidenced by the Sanborn maps of these years. In 1893 and 1898 a rectangular building, labeled "saloon" appears on the map. However, its footprint is different from the structure which appears in 1904, noted as the Gilmore Hotel. The 1909 map labels the same property as the Bancard Hotel. Subsequently, this property is identified as "saloon, rooms, and barber" in 1917, given no notation in 1924 labeled a hotel in 1930, and cited as "vacant" in 1944.

Since the footprint of the hotel remained the same from 1904—1944, one wonders if the saloon of the earlier maps is the Railroad Exchange. One also wonders if Mr. Fayard owned the hotel when it was named the Bancard. According to the granddaughter, he did because her father spent summers in Bay St. Louis until 1919. The question about when the hotel burned can be answered in a general way. The fire must have occurred sometime between the 1944 map and a subsequent update in 1963, for the latter map shows the corner of Kellar and Railroad Ave. as vacant. However, after Hurricane Katrina a group of five buildings were constructed by Linda Lou Nelson in the space once occupied by the Gilmore Hotel.

An interesting aside about James Gilmore Fayard comes from long-time resident Edward "Buster" Heitzman. He remembered that Mr. Fayard gave wallets in the shape of beer kegs as souvenirs. Unfortunately, Mr. Heitzman lost his keepsake in Hurricane Katrina, and the city lost Mr. Heitzman a few years later.

"Fayard, Gilmore." Vertical file. Hancock County Historical Society.

Sanborn Maps. *Bay St. Louis, MS*. New York: Sanborn Map Co., Ltd., 1893—1963.

Scharff, Robert G. *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain*. Lawrenceville, VA: Brunswick Publishing Corp., 1999.

SANBORN MAP COMPANY

The Sanborn Map Company, founded in the mid-1860's, is a highly regarded cartographer of several thousand U. S. cities. Originally developed for fire insurance purposes, the maps were updated periodically until 1970 and provide extremely accurate information about buildings, including commercial, residential, and outbuildings, in a particular city or town. In addition to giving footprints of current structures, the maps also list materials used in construction of these building.

The maps have proven quite useful for preservation and restoration as well as genealogical and other research efforts.

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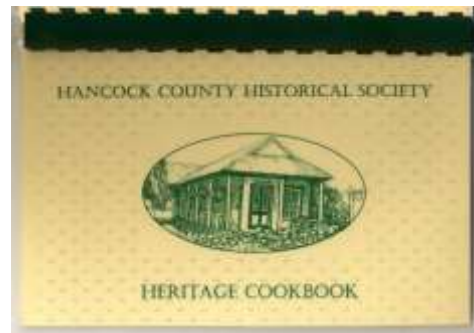
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