

THE

# HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

May 2021

## NEWS FROM LOBRANO HOUSE

The Kate Lobrano House has reopened for members and visitors, and the hours remain the same: Monday through Friday 10:00 a.m. until noon and 1:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m., closing from 12:00 –1:00 for lunch.

With spring here and summer just around the corner, visitors from around the United States have begun coming to the Gulf Coast, and several have visited the Lobrano House.

The much-missed monthly luncheons will resume on Thursday, June 17, 2021. The speaker will be the commercial photographer, Ken Murphy. He will present photographs of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Reservations are required and may be made by calling 228-467-4090.

### President's Corner

Your board of directors and volunteers have been busy this past month on a couple of exciting initiatives, one being the Charles Gray Project which is a documentary on the Society featuring Charles Gray. This documentary highlights Charles' lasting contributions to the Society and our role in

*(continued on p. 2)*



The Larroux Home  
816 North Beach Blvd.  
Bay St. Louis, Mississippi

*Destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, August 29, 2005*

## In response to *Days of Innocence and Childhood* by Chris Roth in *The Historian* February 2021

By  
Dot Kersanac

Thank you so much, Chris, for bringing back such wonderful childhood memories of growing up in Cedar Point next to your family's summer home and being so fortunately involved in an evolving, loving friendship of about seventy of my eighty-four years of life with your family! Let me introduce myself to those of you who don't know me. I am

Dorothy Larroux Kersanac, the daughter of Clara and Larry Larroux of 816 North Beach, next to the Roth's summer home of 818 North Beach.

Let us go back in time... I guess I was in the fourth grade, and one summer these people came in next door with a station wagon, a canoe, some girls all with straight dark hair—kinda bobbed-looking with bangs. I didn't really pay too much attention to them, but was kinda aware that they were there cause no one had been there before that I was aware of. You see, I was an only child and the only female in this area of several boys. So I was kinda happy to see some girls around, and it kinda looked like they were tom boys like me. Well, this was the very beginning of an extremely long

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**PHYSICAL ADDRESS:**

108 Cue Street  
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**Email address:**

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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.”

friendship with the Roths.

Chris wasn't even born when I became aware of his family next door to mine. In fact I can't remember too much about his brothers Richard (called Fella) and Jimmy cause they were younger than I. I was with those older ones that Chris mentioned, his older sisters Yvonne and Alice (called Sister, who was actually one of my bridesmaids much later). Yvonne was the elder sister with whom I was close in the early years and to whom I became much closer after she and her husband Jerry came to Bay St. Louis to live on North Beach by the Bay Waveland Yacht Club. We worked together very closely in the Ladies Auxiliary of the Yacht Club.

*(continued from p. 1)*

preserving the history of Hancock County. This video will be used to educate visitors to the Kate Lobrano House and in presentations to schools, civic organizations, and other groups. This project is slated for completion in June. Our thanks to Virginia Olander for chairing this project.

You will also be seeing communications on the inaugural Cardboard Boat Race on Saturday July 10. The Society is sponsoring this event to service the community, to heighten the awareness of the Hancock County Historical Society, and to raise funds for infrastructure enhancement.

Stay turned for more information on both initiatives.

Best to All

Chris Roth  
President

Back to the original story...so, our friendships grew and grew through the years, and I went into New Orleans on the Wednesday before Easter as St. Joseph's Academy, which I attended in Bay St. Louis, closed at noon on that day. I'd catch the bus or train and meet them. We'd go to a movie, and then I'd come back to Bay St. Louis with them the next day or so. As an only child, I really enjoyed the big family feeling, never realizing at that time, of course, that I'd end up very happily with six children of my own.

Anyway, as our friendships grew, so did the pain of their leaving on Labor Days became more unbearable to the extent that I would really tear up when I told them goodbye because the end of May seemed like such a long time away. As time went on, there were occasions, as I can remember, that I would go into New Orleans for something at Valencia (a social club for teens) and maybe a few other activities, the latter part of grammar school. Yvonne and I were in the same grade in school, and Sister was a year younger.

As we got into high school, Yvonne became involved in many more activities in New Orleans. She, Sister, and the younger sister Kit (Kathleen) were all on the swim team. We were all great swimmers. Swimming out in the Bay against the waves made us very strong so that swimming in a pool for competitions was a breeze! I can remember we swam during the summer months off Camors' pier as Chris mentioned. We swam from as early as we could in the morning until that lunch bell rang calling us in to eat. After lunch we swam from around 3:00 until 6:00 until that bell rang again for supper. We played fate (a game similar to hide and go seek, but with our variation of rules) starting at dusk. Wow! To be able to have all those wonderful memories brought back...I do truly thank you Chris!

As we outgrew fate, we

moved on to playing cards, or in the earlier part of the day, we'd go to my house to bake cookies for the guys to have when they came in from fishing by the pier. I can remember my next door neighbor on the other side, Penny Cole, was on his skiff and the motor fell off the back into this "hole" as we called it. I don't remember if he was ever able to get it out. I do remember that it didn't matter how many cookies we baked. There were never enough as they were always consumed!

One time my Uncle Jim made me a ping-pong table that we put on the front porch, and we played ping-pong many an afternoon-evening as we got older. Also during this time period, we got into playing the piano, or I should say that I played the piano and taught some of them to play a few songs also.

We just had such a wonderful time during the summer months growing up. There was always something to do. Then in the fall and winter months, my friends and I would go to Dupaquier's, a local farm, and ride the horses on Saturdays and go to the A & G theater. On Sundays we went to the Star theater which was at the head of Washington Street.

We rode our bikes all around Cedar Point, and as Chris mentioned, parents called us in for meals. That's when you saw them. However neighbors knew who you belonged to, and if you got into trouble, you knew that your parents would know right after it happened. They all worked together in that regard, and you knew you were caught even before you got home! That certainly doesn't happen anymore!

Summertime in Cedar Point meant Sunday Mass at the Chapel—St. Joseph's Chapel on Dunbar Avenue. My grandmother, Marguerite Backman, played the organ there, and we had a small choir which sang in the choir loft—great memories!

The Larroux Grocery that Chris mentioned was owned by my Uncle Ed, and we purchased it from him after my husband, Joseph Kersanac, and I married and renamed it The Yankee Doodle. As a result of our later divorce, we sold the store. Hurricane Katrina took it down. Unfortunately the storm also took St. Joseph's Chapel, Camors at 900 North Beach (Elmwood), and our former homes on the beach in addition to my previous home at 305 B Street as well as most of the buildings in Cedar Point.

Time goes on. We rebuild. Cedar Point is doing so. Downtown has grown tremendously into a nighttime hot-spot and a definite tourist attraction with a fantastic harbor. However, do I miss the good old days? Most definitely, I do!

Thanks, Chris, for allowing me the opportunity to recall days gone by of summer breezes off North Beach Blvd., the chatter and camaraderie of friends in the area, and all of our summers growing up there in Cedar Point. I'll always think of the Roths with love come Labor Day.

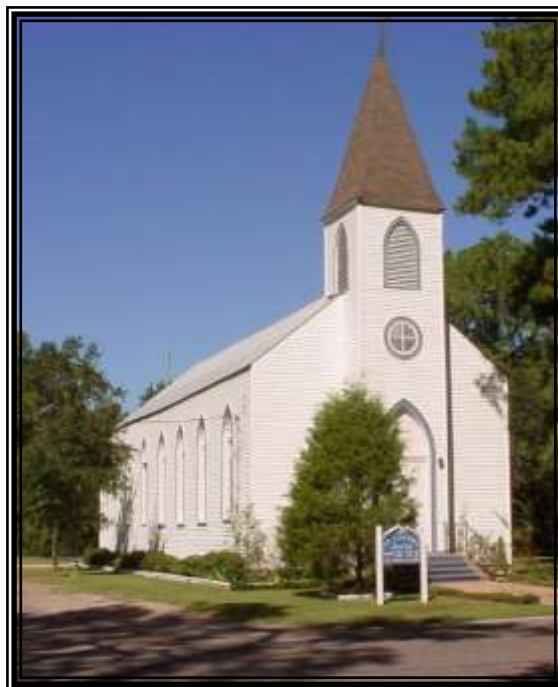
## Six Sisters

By

Kaye Karl

During the Antebellum period along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, a string of "watering holes" along the shore line developed, welcoming visitors arriving by way of sailing sloops. Later with development in water travel, these visitors arrived by steamboat. Residents from the cities of New Orleans and Mobile frequented these watering holes so often that the towns along the Mississippi Gulf coast became known as the Six Sisters—Shieldsboro (Bay St. Louis), Pass Christian, Mississippi City, Biloxi, Ocean Springs, and Pascagoula. Initially travel to these locations was primarily due to the disease of yellow fever and the terror it brought in New Orleans area. Later people visited these areas for their beauty, the cool breezes, and the amenities they offered.

In 1789 Thomas Shields secured a Spanish land grant on



St. Joseph's Chapel

This chapel stood at 1500 Dunbar Avenue in Bay St. Louis, MS. It was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005.

the west side of the Bay of St. Louis. The village that grew on a portion of that grant became known by two interchangeable names, Bay St. Louis and Shieldsboro, but the latter was the official designation until 1875. From the Pearl River to the western shore of the Bay of St. Louis was a bayside strip of homes and summer cottages three to four miles long with the little village of Shieldsboro in the middle. Most of the owners of the homes in these long-established summer retreats were Creole Catholics, descendants of original French and Spanish settlers. However it was to Pass Christian that the Protestant Anglos from the Natchez District of Mississippi migrated to their summer homes.

With the passage of time, boarding houses and hotels developed in both towns. By 1842 Shieldsboro had a first class hotel and the town fathers, local owners and public-spirited citizens, collected enough funds to extend wharfs eighty feet farther into the bay to be able to service boats year round. In addition to the salt water beaches, bath houses, and fresh seafood, many people came because of the curative waters of the spas and health resorts in the Bay.

Entertainment events were added, and what were once prominent watering holes for tourists developed into summer retreats offering high style living and social events furnishing the very best wines and liquors. In addition to



The Tulane Hotel

“The Tulane Hotel, conducted by Mrs. D. H. Boyle, has done much to attract favorable attention to Bay St. Louis as a summer, winter, and health resort. This hotel has accommodations for about sixty guests....”

*from a newspaper article c. 1910*

the houses along the waterfront, a business district began developing along the beach around Main Street. The area housed two bakeries, a drugstore, a saddler, a cigar store, a blacksmith shop, a general store, a barroom, a combination barroom-grocery, and a soda shop, which was owned by a prominent free woman of color.

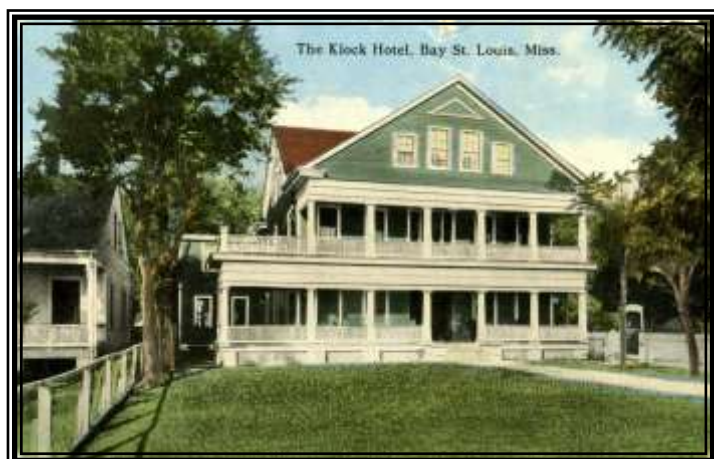
On the east side of the Bay of St. Louis c. 1836, things were growing and developing also. The city celebrated the most elaborate and unequaled hotel on the Gulf Coast. As a result the state legislature passed a charter of incorporation naming the town Pass Christian because of the zenith of this hotel. Later the hotel became the Christian Brothers College, which in 1867

closed because of a yellow fever epidemic which wiped out the students and faculty. Alas, the epidemic seemed to follow people from the cities to the small towns without any respect for social position.

Although there were many positive reasons the Six Sisters doubled or even tripled during normal summers after 1840, the population swelled exceptionally at the first appearance of yellow fever with residents fleeing New Orleans for their summer homes along the Gulf Coast. Another reason the population figures are skewed even today is that many wealthy families built palatial summer residents on the coast giving them what amounts to dual citizenship especially between Bay St. Louis and New Orleans.

#### SOURCES:

“Six Sisters of the Gulf Coast.” *Mississippi Encyclopedia*. [www.mississippiencyclopedia.org](http://www.mississippiencyclopedia.org).  
Sullivan, Charles L. and Murella Hebert Powell. *The Mississippi Gulf Coast, Portrait of a People*. Sun Valley, CA: American Historical Press, 1999.



The Klock Hotel stood at the corner of South Beach Boulevard and what later became Ballentine Street.

There were several cottages and boarding houses in the Bay at the time of the Six Sisters. Among them were the Sea Brook Cottages and the Bay View Boarding House.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

KAYE DUPUY KARL

Kaye Dupuy Karl was born and reared in New Orleans, Louisiana. She attended public schools from kindergarten through high school, graduating in 1972 from J. F. Kennedy High School. She and her husband, Matt Karl, have been married forty-nine years. They have three children, four grandchildren, and two fur babies. Presently they reside in Bay St Louis.

Furthering her education, Kay attended Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, studying accounting and pursuing legal studies.

For twenty-eight years, Kay and her husband owned and worked together in their own security company. They were licensed and bonded in two states—Mississippi and Louisiana. They employed forty-eight employees, full and part-time. She was also a professional legal secretary (PLS) and has worked as a court clerk in the Hancock County Youth Court. For several years Kay was employed by NASA at the John C. Stennis Space center where she served as a US-



Kaye Karl

MGC Public Relations associate.

Kaye joined the Kate Lobrano House Staff in January 2021 and has become a vital member of our office group.

MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL EXPOSITION

The annual Mississippi Gulf Coast Historical and Cul-

tural Exposition was held at the Biloxi Visitors Center on April 30—May 1, 2021. The event is normally held in February to commemorate the landing of the French explorers Pierre Le Moyne d’Iberville and his brother, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, de Bienville. The pandemic caused the later date.

Visitors arrived both days to enjoy the exhibits and displays presented by historical, genealogical, and other local groups from along the Gulf Coast. The plan is to have the Exposition in February next year, so be on the look out for the dates.

EXHIBITS



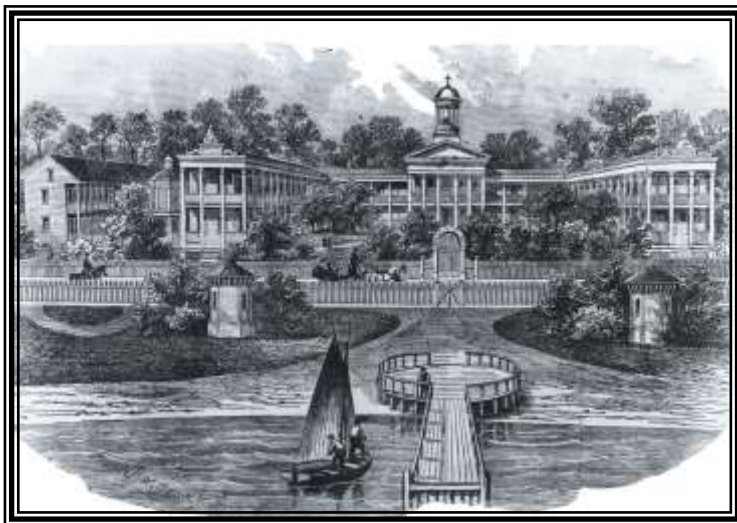
Gulf Coast National Heritage Area



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Below:

BILOXI HIGH



The Pass Christian Hotel

(photo from *The Mississippi Gulf Coast, Portrait of a People*)



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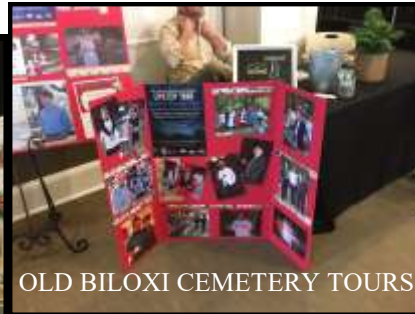
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The Gilmore Hotel stood on the corner of Railroad Ave. (Blaze) and Keller St., across from the depot.

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