

THE

HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

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Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

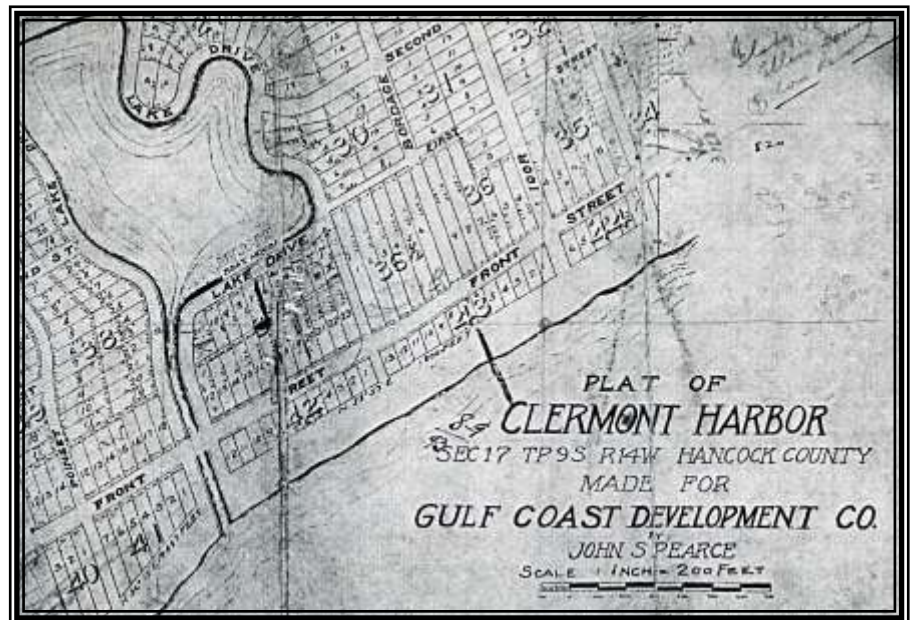
August 2022

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, August 18, 2022, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Speaking at the luncheon will be Jay Ponder, Communication Director, Stennis Airport. He will give an overview of its operations. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 228-467-4090. **Please call by noon on Wednesday, August 17**, to make your reservation in order to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-eight people and to apprise us of the number of lunches to order. **Served at noon, lunch is \$15.00 for members and \$17.00 for nonmembers**, payable at the door. The catering order is submitted on Wednesday morning prior to the luncheon on Thursday. If you need to cancel your reservation, please call by 2 p.m. on Tuesday prior to the luncheon if at all possible so that the society does not incur unnecessary expenses. It is catered by Almost Home Catering, Michelle Nichols, chef. The lunch menu is chicken and white wine sauce, garlic mashed potatoes, green salad, dinner rolls, and cupcakes.

ANNUAL CEMETERY TOUR

The 27th Annual Cemetery Tour will be held at Cedar Rest Cemetery on Saturday, October 29, 2022. It will run from 4 p.m.—6 p.m. To be an actor, please get in touch with HCHS by calling 228-467-4090 or by email at hancockcountyhis@bellsouth.net.



A larger copy of this map (c.1910) may be found in map drawer #3 (local towns and areas) at the Kate Lobrano House.

CLERMONT HARBOR

By
Jim Keating, MD
and
Virginia Olander, Editor

There are several communities in the past in Hancock County that have come and gone and might be considered ghost towns. One such beach village was Clermont Harbor. Some of the 'old timers,' like Russell Guerin, the historian, remember with fond memories childhood summers at Clermont Harbor. The Guerin Family played an important role in the story of Clermont Harbor, and Russell Guerin is one of the most significant his-

torians of Hancock County.

There is a patch of terra firma forest land in Hancock County that is next to the shoreline of Lake Borgne affectionately known as Clermont Harbor. It is relatively high ground situated between two large marshes (Jackson Marsh and Otis Marsh) ideal for Indian and early pioneer settlers. Historically, it is east of Lakeshore or Bayou Caddy and west of Waveland.

The history of this place goes back over two centuries because pioneer settlers and planters bought the land and established plantations and farms. At the turn of the twentieth century, a town was established as a business enterprise called Clermont City/Clermont Harbor. This community survived adversities such as fire and hurricanes until 2005

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Eddie Coleman, Editor
James Keating, Publisher

Published monthly by the
**HANCOCK COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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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.”

when Hurricane Katrina ravished the Gulf Coast.

During the nineteenth century, much of southern Hancock County was owned by several wealthy planters that raised cattle, grew crops such as cotton, and cut timber. From west to east along the coast, from East Pearl River to Bay St. Louis (Shieldsboro) were the families of Dolby (Dolby’s point), John Francis Hamtramck (J.F.H) Claiborne (Laurel Wood), Danielles (Clifton), LaFontaine (Ansley), Ladner, Joor/Ioor (Point Clear), Asa Russ/Jackson (Sea Song), and Morin (Waveland). Thus, an upper echelon of wealthy planter families (as well as other businessmen entrepreneurs in the schooner carrying trade and timber industry) emerged and prospered in this era. These men and women were community boosters who served in public office and prudently managed the affairs of the county and promoted capital improvements like roads, bridges, waterway management, and construction of public buildings. The descendants of these key families over five generations represented an important and valuable bedrock foundation of Hancock County society today.

resent an important and valuable bedrock foundation of Hancock County society today.

The Ioor (Joor) family owned a large holding of land in what would later be known as Lakeshore and Clermont Harbor in the mid-nineteenth century. John Ioor called his plantation “Point Clear” (Point Claire). It was located east of Bayou Caddy. Today, a strip of marshland west of Bayou Caddy is named Point Clear, but this particular spot would not have been suitable for a plantation.

An ancestor of H. C. Joor, George Joor, lived on a plantation in South Carolina which he called “Clermont,” and at one time there was once a Clermont County in South Carolina. George Ioor’s grandson, John Ioor, purchased a tract of land sometime in the 1820s, 3,990 acres (six square miles) that included Lakeshore and Clermont Harbor. He was an absentee landlord of this plantation that owned slaves and grew cotton. John lived in Woodville, Mississippi, but he traveled to the plantation several times a year. His son, Peter Ioor,

President’s Corner

The history of the Acadians presentation at our July luncheon by Warren Perin was a sell out! Our luncheons on the 3rd Thursday of each month provide our members and guests an opportunity to learn about our history and culture and a chance to visit with old friends and make new ones.

A special thanks to Bert Young, our chief audio-visual volunteer who not only gives of his time but also has provided us with a state-of-the-art sound system.

Jace Ponder with Hancock Port and Harbor will be speaking to us about the growth and significant economic contributions Port Bienville and Stennis Airport make to our community at our August 18th luncheon, so make your reservations today.

On Second Saturday in September (the 10th), HCHS is one of the two Hot Spots, and we are making plans for an entertaining event, so join the fun! Also, on Saturday September 17th, we will be having a showing of the Charles Gray documentary on the history of the Mississippi Coast. One showing will be at 2:00 for members and guests followed by a showing at 4:00 for the public.

Chris Roth
President

moved to Hancock County around 1871. Peter married Charlotte Withers Herron (1810-1871) of Charleston, South Carolina.

In 1897, Judge John Ioor and Professor F. C. Bordage, Sr., purchased the property which they called "Clermont City" and laid down or filed with the county the original plat of streets. Two of these streets today bear the names Ioor and Bordage. Other names of the Ioor family are also currently the street names: Herron, Guignard, and Poinsett. Bordage was a principal of the Waveland Public School and served as the deputy county clerk and assessor. By 1911, there were fifteen resident property owners and five non-residents, probably from New Orleans.

It was in that year that a new enterprise, the Gulf Coast Development Company (GCD), was formed. The village was renamed "Clermont Harbor" because the new owners of most of the land intended to dig a magnificent lake with a harbor. By 1913, the President of GCD, Charles Hopkins, proposed building a hotel with the hope that one day Clermont Harbor would be the "Riviera of New Orleans." Hopkins built the Harbor Inn which was a beautiful hotel with Greek Revival architecture. Sadly, the Hurricane of 1915 nearly destroyed the building. Nevertheless, Hopkins rebuilt the hotel in 1926. The village had survived and in this time frame there were two groceries, two bars, two churches, an ice cream parlor, and a commuter train.

The Harbor Inn was enjoyed by visitors during the Depression. However, the hotel failed financially, was put up for sale in 1946, and was sold to Wilfred Guerin and the Clermont Harbor Hotel Corporation. Unfortunately, the hotel burned down that year. The community of Clermont Harbor was a popular beach resort destination for fifty-nine years despite the inconveniences of Hurricane Betsy

(1965) and Hurricane Camille (1969). However, Hurricane Katrina in 2005 destroyed all the buildings leaving only the raw land. Today, there are only a few camps on raised piers in what is now a ghost town.

In 1901, there was a big discovery of oil called the Spindle Top Gusher in Beaumont, TX. Consequently, an era of oil-drilling was born. Here in Hancock County, W.H. Bouslog determined that a site in Clermont City was a likely source of oil because the land had the same physical characteristics as did the land in Beaumont. Bouslog created the Mississippi Land and Abstract Company, and a drilling spot was chosen not far from the L & N railroad depot in Clermont City. It took five months to drill to a depth of 1800 feet. A second oil well in Clermont City was started in 1904. Both wells were eventually abandoned, and no oil was ever successfully or profitably found in Hancock County.

Wilford Guerin's son, Russell Guerin, was born in 1932 at the old Mercy Hospital in New Orleans. He lived in the 9th Ward



Russell Guerin

This photo of Russell was taken in the spring of 2022 when he donated his vast collection of historical records to the Hancock County Historical Society.

in early childhood, but the family moved to Gallier Street during the Depression. Russell attended Holy Cross High School and then went to Loyola University in New Orleans from which he earned a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education. The Guerin Family had a camp in Clermont Harbor, and Russell has many cherished memories of the summers. After college Russell enlisted in the Army and was made a cryptanalyst with the Army's Security Service. In 1956, he started working for the New York Life Insurance Company. He married Merle Higgins (b. 1937), and they had four daughters: Nicole, Michelle, Madelane, and Mignon. Russell and Merle were married for twenty years but are now divorced.

Russell retired after forty years in 1994 and moved to Clermont Harbor. He bought a house with two acres on Second Street next to the harbor. He also kept an apartment in New Orleans. It was in this time frame that he met Charles Gray and joined the Hancock County Historical Society. After Katrina destroyed his house in 2005, he had an apartment in the Bay.

In the last few years, Russell has lived in New Orleans. His father was Wilfred Louis Guerin (1900-1960) and his mother was Carmela Cali. Wilfred's ancestors came from the Loire Valley in France, and Camila had ancestry from Sicily. Wilfred sold automobiles and real estate such as the aforementioned Harbor Hotel. Their first house in Clermont Harbor was on Forrest Street, named after the famous Confederate Civil War general, Nathan Bedford Forrest. Russell's paternal grandparents were Merinville Guerin and Emil Bezou Olivier. Bezou is an old, proud New Orleans French name.

Russell recalls two grocery stores in Clermont Harbor across the street from each other

on Clermont Blvd. One was the Garcia Grocery Store, and the other was *Ladner Grocery Store*. Harold and Lillian's Bar is still in business.

Russell has researched and published much history of Hancock County. He is very proud of his work on one of the most beautiful old waterfront mansions in Waveland, the Pirate House, which was destroyed by Hurricane Camille. The building was constructed around 1803 and was a perfect example of the Louisiana planter type of house. Charles Gayarre writes in his *History of Louisiana* that "Negros were smuggled into the territory through the Spanish possessions by way of lakes Borgne, Pontchartrain, and Maurepas." Guerin discovered documentation in Colonial Spanish records indicating ownership of the Pirate House by Louis Boisdore and Antonine Peytavin who were related by marriage. Peytavin was a resident merchant of New Orleans whose family were planters in south Louisiana around Convent in St. James Parish. In addition, Peytavin bought and sold slaves both legally and illegally. Louisiana records show that he had 218 known legal transactions in slaves. The Pirate House was a site of dealing slaves serving as a relay station to transfer this precious cargo from ocean-going vessels to smaller boats such as schooners and sloops for the passage around New Orleans to the Mississippi River above the port for the ultimate destination of the cotton plantations around Natchez. The Pirate House was dealing slaves in 1806-1807 when it was seized by Spanish authorities for slave trafficking in 1807. Guerin successfully debunked local legend that this house was owned and operated by the infamous pirate, John Lafitte.

Another legend peddled around Hancock County for over a century was the one that claimed President Andrew Jackson bought land in the present-day location of Buccaneer Park next to Clermont

Harbor. The plantation was known as Sea Song. Russell did some excellent research which demonstrated quite convincingly that it was the President's son, Andrew Jackson Jr., who bought the property from Asa Russ around 1860. A careful review of the letters of Andrew Junior's wife, Sarah Jackson at that time established that she and her husband were briefly the occupants of that famous plantation.

In 2014, Russell published *Early Hancock County*, one of the most important books about our county. The book covers diverse subjects such as Indians, pirates, plantations, slavery, the Civil War, tax rolls, and early pioneer life. He was fascinated by old records, property deeds, death certificates, court documents, and newspaper articles. He enjoyed researching subjects as much as he liked writing history and reported "...sometimes when doing research, just when you think you are at a dead end, there is a surprise discovery and an 'eureka moment!'" Russell donated his entire website of over ninety articles about history to the Hancock County Historical Society available to all for purposes of research and study. The Award Committee of the Mississippi Historical Society selected Russell Guerin to be presented an Award of Merit at the March 10-11, 2022 meeting in Hattiesburg.

In conclusion, the streets of Clermont Harbor are mostly empty, and the forest has regrown over most of the original lots. The street names are still visible and are reminders of the early pioneer families that owned cotton plantations or cobbled together land development enterprises to establish a beach resort destination. Sadly, hurricanes ultimately destroyed the "Riviera of New Orleans." Historian Russell Guerin wrote much of the history of this special place. He has been a mentor and a role model for the members of the Hancock County Historical Society.

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- Scarff, Robert G. *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain*. Lawrenceville, VA: Brunswick Publication Corp., 1999.



The Clermont Harbor Community Pier was the place where all residents of Clermont Harbor could and did gather.



A mule was important in the construction of an infrastructure pipeline during the building of the Stennis Space Center.

A MULE'S WORLD

By

James Keating M.D.

Mules were introduced to the United States by George Washington in 1785. In fact Washington received a female donkey as a gift from the King of Spain. The hybrid animal called a mule is the product of a cross between a male donkey and a female horse. A mule cannot reproduce itself. At the time of Washington's death in 1799, Mount Vernon boasted a herd of fifty-seven mules. By 1897, there were 2.2 million mules in the United States, and in that time frame, mules had mostly replaced horses for the purpose of farm work especially in the South. In 1920 in Mississippi there were 214,852 horses and 308,216 mules.

American agriculture desperately needed a work animal to replace the horse or oxen at the turn of the nineteenth century. A mule ate one half the volume of grain feed compared to a horse. In addition, mules were resistant to southern heat and insects and were smarter than horses. The mule was a stronger animal with greater stamina and could pull a wagon over a rocky road or tow a barge on a canal fifteen miles, rather than five for a horse. A favorite song in this era had a verse that went "I've got a mule and her name is Sal/ Fifteen years on the Erie Canal./She's a good old worker and a good old pal,/ Fifteen miles on the Erie Ca-

nal." The legs and hooves of a mule were stronger than a horse, and mules did not tend to "founder" or go lame on rough terrain.

In Hancock County by 1850, farmers did not depend so much on oxen. Mules were affordable and plentiful. Large mule farms were created in Tennessee and Kentucky, and Mississippi farmers and timbermen had mules delivered from Memphis by steamboats, gypsies, and railroads. The American wilderness was conquered by man and mule. Together they cleared the forest, drained it, and held it. The prosperous cotton belt economy foundation was well established by mid-century in the South.

Therefore, it was a mule's world in the South until the mid-twentieth century. By then, the tractor and the mechanical cotton-picker had replaced the mule and the share croppers and tenant farmers, who subsequently became day laborers.

Modern folklore about Southern mules suggested Depression sharecroppers, Tobacco Road, and a backward Mississippi agrarian economy, probably a legacy of the "forty acres and a mule" policy promoted during and after the Civil War. Even so, some thought of mules as a symbol of durability and reliability, although others considered them difficult and unpredictable. There is no consistently favorable mythology in America regarding mules. On the other hand, the father of every mule, the donkey, became the symbol of the Demo-

cratic Party in 1828 when Andrew Jackson incorporated the image of a donkey on campaign posters because his political opponents repeatedly called him a 'jackass.'

In summary, American means of transportation especially in the West was to a great degree wagons and mules. Mules were the animals that pulled the wagons on the Oregon Trail and towed the barges on canals in the northeast, carrying freight and passengers between major cities. Mules in the north symbolized progress, achievement, and Yankee economic pride. Men and mules built a robust agrarian economy in the South. The advent of the tractor ended the Mules World. Subsequently, almost all of the mules were sold to dogfood factories. Feed crop acreage planted for mules and oxen were converted to cotton cash crop land. George Washington is considered the father of the American mule as well as the father of our country.

SOURCES:

Buck, Rinker. *The Oregon Trail*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015.

Keating, James. "Farming in the 19th Century in Hancock County," *The Historian of Hancock County*, Bay St. Louis, MS: HCHS, Oct. 2018.

ANNUAL CEMETERY TOUR

Even though October is still a couple of months away, it's not too early to begin thinking about and planning the Cemetery Tour. The 27th Annual Cemetery Tour will be held on Saturday, October 29, 2022. at Cedar Rest Cemetery, 200 South Second St. in Bay Saint Louis. 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 or email the Society at hancockcountyhis@bellsouth.net. All actors and guides must be members of the Historical Society.

DONATION

This painting of St. Joseph's Chapel, located at 1500 Dunbar in Bay St. Louis (prior to Katrina), was donated to the Hancock County Historical Society by Linda Falk Stalder in honor of her mother, Aline Lauter Falk. Mrs. Falk painted it in 1987.



DONATION

Three framed Sanborn maps of 1924 Bay St. Louis —#1, #8, and #10, all with pencil notations—were donated to the Hancock County Historical Society by Alfred J. Walker of Natchez, who once lived in Bay St. Louis. In addition to the three framed photos, Mr. Walker's donation included nine unframed maps of the same year and a proposed landscape plan for Tucker Rendon, 404 Jeff Davis Ave., Waveland, MS.

The donation was made in memory of
Keith H. Karlson (2016)
Camille Tate (2022)
Charles Gray (2022)



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For Sale

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Select items from the large collection of jewelry, collectibles, and artwork (excluding Mardi Gras items) will be for sale through the Hancock County Tourism Mardi Gras Museum in Bay St Louis, MS.

Any person interested in viewing and/or purchasing the items can make an appointment by calling the Hancock County Tourism Bureau.

Proceeds are designated by the Pogue family to benefit the Mardi Gras Museum as a tribute to Yancy Pogue and well-known Mardi Gras costume designer and maker, Carter Church.

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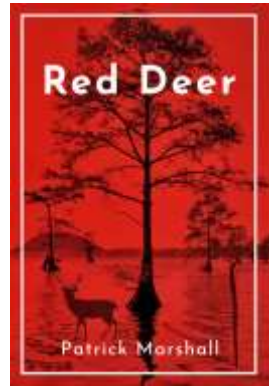


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