

THE

HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

January 2023

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, January 19, 2023, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. The guest speaker will be Pat Murphy, who will speak about his forthcoming book dealing with Bay St. Louis in the 1950's, 60's, and 70's. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 228-467-4090. **Please call by noon on Wednesday, January 18**, 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 non-members**, 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 sausage jambalaya, vegetables, salad, yeast rolls, and white cake.



Alsay and Mary Necaize were two of the first settlers "to run cows" on their farm in Necaize Crossing.

NECAISE CROSSING

By James Keating, MD
Virginia and Charles Parrot,
MD, Editors

One of the oldest families in Hancock County is the Necaize Family. Present-day members of this large clan, like current resident Bruce Necaize, the great-great grandson of Alsay (pronounced *Allcee*) and Mary Necaize, can trace their ancestry back to Cat Island. The Necaize family were Cath-

olic settlers originally emigrating from France by way of Mobile, Alabama, to the Gulf Coast in the 18th century. Recording the stories about the lives of any family presents a rich history of its members, its cultural heritage, and its unique individuals. Such is the case of the Necaize family.

One of the first settlers in Necaize Crossing was Alsay Necaize (1846-1934), who owned about two hundred acres of farmland at the crossing of the Necaize-Caesar Road (MS Hwy #53) and the Old Poplarville Road (MS Hwy 603). This spot acquired the

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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.”

name “Necaise Crossing” in 1921 because the Mississippi Southern Railroad crossed next to the junction of the two aforementioned byways. This railroad built by the Hines Lumber Company that connected the Kiln to Lumberton crossed from the west side of the Old Poplarville Hwy to the east side in its course from south to north right at the neighborhood now called Necaise Crossing. Necaise Crossing was not a camp or a water stop for the Edward Hines Lumber Company, but a crossing just as the name suggests. That said, a double track and a switch station were located there to allow trains to pass each other.

Alsay Necaise married the daughter of his neighbor, Hebrew Ladner, Marie “Mary” Virginia “Eugenie” Ladner (1853-

1923). Their first child was a daughter named Alfocene (1886-1889), who often played on a nearby hilltop field. Sadly, Alfocene died at the age of three from yellow fever and was buried on that same small hilltop. Her grandfather, Hebrew Ladner, owned that land and donated it to the county to become a cemetery in his granddaughter Alfocene’s memory and is now known as Necaise Cemetery. It is on Earl C. Ladner Road just off the Necaise-Caesar Road. While the modern Necaise family in Hancock County originally came from Mobile, their ancestors originally emigrated from France.

Alsay Necaise worked cutting timber and running cows. This geographical community was called Necaise Crossing for over a century. However, in the

President’s Corner

As many of us have experienced, the sensation of time grows shorter with the end of one year and the beginning of the next. This phenomenon is common among all of us as we mature. Once explanation put forth is that as we get older the rate of new experiences lessens compared with youth, when almost everything is new. That leads to a sense of the days being longer but time passing much more quickly overall.

I mention this as it seems just a short time ago, I was writing the December 2021 President’s Corner and yes, time has flown by. Despite this rapid passage of time, your board of directors and volunteers have made good use of each day in making the Hancock County Historical Society more relevant to our community.

At our January luncheon meeting, we will share with you the highlights of the progress we have made in the past year and will have Pat Murphy as our speaker. Pat will speak about life and times growing up in the Bay during the 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s, which is the subject of his soon-to-be published book Growing Up Downtown.

I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas, and I send Best Wishes to you for a Happy New Year.

Chris Roth
President



This map of Hancock County shows the following neighborhoods from the top downward to the Bay: Steep Hollow, Crane Creek, Caesar, Necaise Crossing, Sellers, Picayune, White Cypress Lake, Kiln, Bay St. Louis, and Pearllington. (For maps showing the evolution of Hancock County since its beginning as a Mississippi Territorial County, check the June 2021 issue of the *Historian* on our website.)

and his brother were competent and hard-working laborers. The Weston Timber Company maintained a vast network of small gage railroad tracks into the nearby regional piney woods forest. One rail line extended to the general area of Necaise Crossing and followed the course of the present-day “Dummy Line Road” between Hwy 43 and Hwy 603. Bruce Necaise reported that Sebastian managed this track of land for many years with a good reputation. Because of this, the timber men of the local sawmill reportedly gave this section of track the nickname “Dummy Line” because Sebastian couldn’t speak. His speech disorder was called “dumb” at this time in history, but he was not mentally impaired. The expression eventually became ubiquitous throughout Mississippi as a colloquial expression for timber railroad “spur tracks” (also called tram roads). Another possible origin for the “Dummy Line” description may be related to the nickname for a small engine used in forest tracks called a “dummy en-

more recent past, maps and local usage refer to this area as just “Necaise.”

Alsay lived in a L-shaped shotgun farmhouse that was destroyed in the 20th century by a hurricane. The land stayed in the family, and the widow of Alsay’s great-great-grandson still lives on the old homestead. An ancient oak tree that Alsay planted years ago also survived next to the more modern farmhouse at that same location.

The local Necaise inhabitants now worship at the St. Matthew the Apostle Catholic Church in the White Cedar neighborhood in Hancock County. In Alsay’s day, they attended the Infant of Prague Catholic Church, which was located nearby on Hwy 603 in the White Cyprus neighborhood just east of the White Cypress Lake Community real estate development.

One Sunday in 1934, Alsay could not catch his horse in order to ride to church. His wife, Mary, had passed away in 1923. Instead, Alsay decided to

walk to church along the Old Poplarville Highway (Hwy 603). Because Father Denis held mass at The Infant of Prague Church once a month, it was important to Alsay for him to stay connected with his Catholic faith. Along the road, he suffered a massive stroke and died.

Sebastian Cuevas was a contemporary relative of Alsay. He was disabled, being both deaf and mute. Nevertheless, he



The Locomotive #7 “Sonora” in Santa Cruz, CA, is similar to the engine used on the “Dummy Line Road” in Hancock County, MS.

gine” or “steam donkey engine.”

A great-great-grandson of Alsay and Mary is Bruce Necaïse (b. 1964), who currently lives in Waveland, Mississippi, and has been an invaluable source for genealogical information for this article. He was born in the King’s Daughters and Sons Emergency Hospital in Bay St. Louis. Bruce was reared in the Bay because his father, Pete, worked for Coast Electric Company. The family had a Jersey cow as did many families in that era. The Jersey cow produced milk with a higher cream content than a Holstein cow; however, the Jersey cow is harder to milk manually because of her smaller teats. Bruce remembers not being able to persuade his father to get a Holstein cow and had the onerous responsibility of milking the Jersey before and after school. Bruce graduated from Bay High School and Pearl River Junior College. He is currently divorced and has started several businesses, one of which is an assisted-living home for veterans in Riceville.

Bruce’s father was Prather “Pete” Necaïse (1934-2018) who served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War and also worked as an electrician for Coast Electric. Bruce’s mother, June Carver (1936-2018), was also from the Bay. Bruce’s paternal grandmother, Ethyl Cuevas Necaïse, was the link in the direct genealogical line connecting Bruce to the aforementioned Alsay Necaïse who was not his paternal grandfather despite the same shared surname, Necaïse. Indeed, many of the folks in this close-knit neighborhood of Necaïse Crossing are interrelated. Other common French Catholic families names in this region include Ladner and Cuevas.

Bruce Necaïse’s grandparents, Oliga (1914-1970) and Ethyl Cuevas Necaïse (1916-1997, lived in Rocky Hill, Mississippi, and took care of Bruce quite often. Rocky Hill has an elevation containing rocks with significant deposits of iron ore that people have gathered for many important usages through the years. The Rocky Hill neighborhood is locat-

ed at the corner of Dummy Line Road and Hwy 603. Presently, Bruce’s cousin Dot lives in Rocky Hill. Bruce Necaïse’s other grandfather, Donatien Necaïse (1873-1920) is remembered for shooting a member of a gang of jayhawker bandits in the head with a Civil War muzzle-loaded shotgun. At the time, he was married to Molvina Necaïse (1877-1938). The recent generations of this Necaïse Family were buried in the Bayou Coco Cemetery in the Kiln.

In conclusion, Necaïse Crossing is an old neighborhood in Hancock County. Alsay Necaïse had a farm at the crossing of two old byways that are presently Hwy 53 and Hwy 603. Bruce Necaïse represents a fifth generation member of this branch of the Necaïse Clan. There are sixteen such neighborhoods in Hancock County like Necaïse Crossing that produced many hard-working farmers and fishermen over the last two hundred years. These ancestors represented the essential heart and fabric of our society. They built the prosperous economy that is still enjoyed today.

SOURCES:

- “Bayou Coco Cemetery.” *Vertical Files*, Hancock County Historical Society, Bay St. Louis, MS.
- Keating, James W. “Catahoula,” *The Historian of Hancock County*, Bay St. Louis, July 2020.
- “Necaïse.” <http://mapcarta.com>.
- “Necaïse, Bruce. Personal interview, September 7, 2022.
- Scharff, Robert G. *Louisiana’s Loss, Mississippi’s Gain*. Lawrenceville, VA: Brunswick Publishing Corp, 1994.



Brady McCaw and Ruston Breisacher spent several months after school at the Hancock County Historical Society digitizing records collected by and donated to the Society over the past several years. As the expression for older folks goes where computers are concerned, “Find a youngster to help,” and that is exactly what we did.

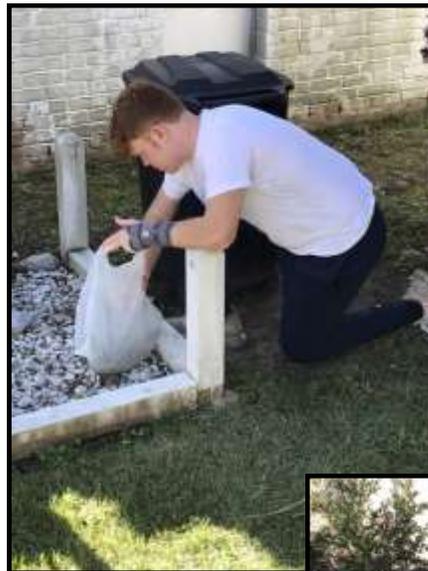
THE FEAST OF ST. STANISLAUS

Friday, November 11 is the Feast of St. Stanislaus. The students of SSC volunteered service to the community in celebration of the day. Five young men came to the Lobrano House and helped beautify the yard. They trimmed the hedges and low-hanging tree branches, weeded and mulched the flower beds, and did other chores. Thank you, boys, for doing such a wonderful job!



These are the young men of St. Stanislaus who did the work at the Hancock County Historical Society.

L to R: Ruston Breisacher, Jack Breisacher, Sam Watkins, Layne Hearty, Brady, McCaw





**The Christmas Party and Instillation of
2023 Board of Directors**

Front row—left to right: Georgie Morton, Secretary; and
Beverly Frater, Treasurer

Back row—left to right: Chris Roth, President; Bryan Frater,
Publicity & Fund Raising; Bert Younb, Audiovisual Tech;
Jim Keating, Publicity Chairman; and Ron Thorp, Chairman of the
House Committee

Not pictured—Jim Codling, Historian and Parliamentarian; Lea
Young, Director of Communications



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HANCOCK COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TREE CONTEST

The theme of the 2022 presentations was “Storybook Holiday.” Three of the organizations presenting displays are the *Sea Coast Echo* (displaying historical editions of the paper), MAP (with the Grinch), and the Hancock County Historical Society display (below).



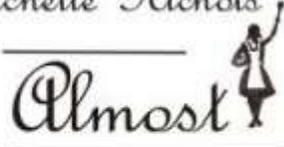
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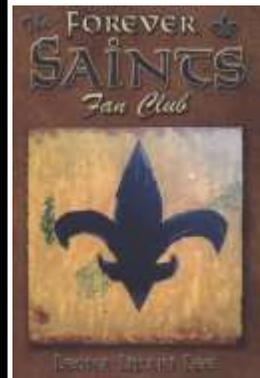


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All Proceeds Support the Mardi Gras Museum

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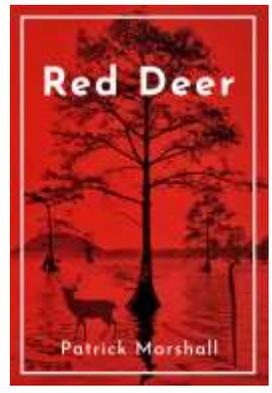
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