

THE

HISTORIAN



OF HANCOCK COUNTY

www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

August 2023

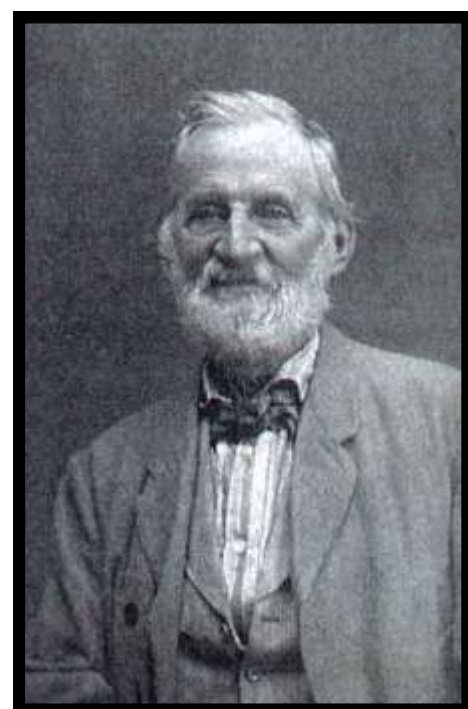
COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, August 17, 2023, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. The guest speaker will be Aiden Graves from the Mississippi Aviation Heritage Museum, located at 429 Pass Road in Gulfport. Mr. Graves serves as the historian, curator, and social media manager. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 228-467-4090. **Please call by noon on Wednesday, August 16**, to make your reservation. Seating is limited to forty-eight (48) people, and we need to order the correct number of lunches. **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 at noon prior to the luncheon on Thursday. If you need to cancel your reservation, please call by noon on Wednesday 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 roast pork with peas and carrots, mashed potatoes, salad, rolls, and sticky toffee date cake.

President of the Hancock County
Historical Society,

Chris Roth,

has been recognized by the
Hancock County Chamber of
Commerce, as one of the top 10
Outstanding Citizens of the Year.



Christian Koch was a Danish sea captain who often sailed into the port of New Orleans in his carrying trade. At age thirty, he fell in love with Annette (Nettie) Netto, who was the fifteen-year-old daughter of Florentine Netto of New Orleans. Christian and Nettie married in 1841 and moved to Logtown, Mississippi, where they bought farmland.

The Koch Family

By
James Keating, M.D.

A historic family in Logtown was the Koch Family. Christian Koch (1811-1894) was a merchant marine Danish sea captain that settled in Hancock County in 1841. He married a fifteen-year-old girl, Annette "Nettie" Netto (1826-1886), in 1841, and they settled near Logtown on the south bank of Bogue Homa Bayou in 1854. Christian and Annette reared six children and Christian

bought and sold land in Hancock County all his life.

Christian and Nettie were letter writers and hundreds of their letters are preserved in the Hill Memorial Library at Louisiana State University. These letters depict the life of ordinary citizens in Hancock County during the Civil War. Christian owned a schooner named *Experiment*, and he sailed across the Atlantic Ocean because one of his businesses was buying and selling cargo. Lumber from the Pearl River sawmills was in great demand everywhere, and the timber industry in Hancock County was beginning to

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Eddie Coleman, Editor
James Keating, Publisher

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**LOBRANO HOUSE
HOURS**

MONDAY — FRIDAY
10:00AM — 3:00PM
WEDNESDAY—10:00AM—
5:00PM
SATURDAY—1:00PM—3:00PM

CLOSED 12—1 (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.”

flourish in this antebellum period. Annette ran the farm and their timber business selling trees or logs to the local mill while Christian was away at sea. The Koch farm raised beef cattle, owned two oxen, and had a milking cow. Annette and her children planted peas, pumpkins, turnips, China sugar cane, black-eyed peas, potatoes, cabbage, corn, and rice.

The Civil War brought great hardship to the citizens of Hancock County. Although no major battle was fought in Hancock County, the Pearl River Valley was a “no-man’s-land” with sympathizers of both the Union and the Confederacy. Logtown residents were subject to Yankee raids, Confederate cavalry intrusions, and migrating bands of jayhawkers, deserters, and bandits. Fort Pike on the Rigolets was the border between the Yankee and Rebel lines. The Union commander of Fort Pike did not allow free passage from one territory to the other.

Christian Koch was antiwar and anti-slavery in sentiment, but

was frequently harassed by the Union authorities. Consequently, he and his schooner did business in Union waters, but he could not sail up the Pearl River freely without a pass. Hence, the need to communicate with Nettie by letter. However, Koch worked with the Union army to be allowed to do business with his schooner. The Federals often would charter his ship for its use paying him \$15/day. He was also able to participate in some of the legal and illegal traffic of JFH Claiborne, a local plantation owner, who was able to do business with both sides of this conflict, earning the distrust of everyone. The economic survivors in this period had to be clever, resourceful, and cunning.

Both Union and Confederate cavalry raided the Logtown area from time to time. Christian and Annette’s son, Elders, was drafted into the Confederate cavalry which he later deserted. After that, he had to hide in Devil’s Swamp to avoid being arrested or even hanged as a deserter. Elders reported to his fa-

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Mercy Train is a must-see stage production on the history of the “Orphan Trains” followed by historical commentary and Q&A. *Please see page 6 for additional details.*

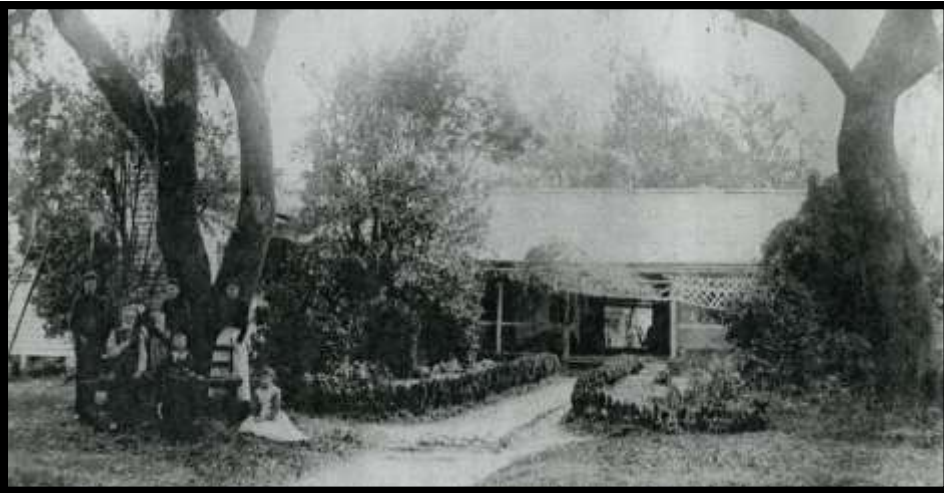
The Charles Gray “Star” will be installed and celebrated in front of the Kate Lobrano House on Saturday, October 14th. Additional detail will follow in an upcoming newsletter.

The Saint Augustine Seminary Centennial Celebration will be held on October 28 & 29 with family fun, food, and beverages on Saturday, and a liturgical celebration followed by a fish fry provided by the renowned Saint Rose cooking team.

Legacy Giving: Your society depends on dues donations and fund raising to cover our annual operating costs and capital improvements. Please consider making a provision in your will for a Legacy Gift to the Hancock County Historical Society.

“Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.

Chris Roth
President



The farmhouse in this photograph was the residence of the Koch Family during the Civil War. It was located on the south bank of the Bogue Homa Bayou near Logtown on the Pearl River.

ther that mosquitoes protected him against capture from Confederate cavalry better than anything else. The local Confederate cavalry under the command of General Nathan Bedford Forrest, whom Annette knew, was more of an irritant than the Union cavalry. Yankees would at least pay for the cattle they confiscated. The Confederate cavalry was always seeking conscripts from the young boys on the farms, exacting money for their release after being drafted, demanding food and lodging, and stealing clothing, tobacco, logs, cattle, horses or behaving in a disorderly manner. It got so bad in Hancock County that the Feds authorized the creation of local Citizen's Committees, under the command of a Captain, that would melt out frontier justice, including hanging for thieves.

The Koch Family was one of the first settlers of Logtown. Christian Koch, like Simon Favre and the Poitevant Family, made their first money as sea merchants in their schooners. Additional wealth was acquired in the timber, cattle, and real estate sectors of the economy. Christian and Nettie stand out as legendary figures in this early history of Hancock County. They are buried in the Koch Cemetery at Bogue Homa near Logtown. They have hundreds of

descendants in Hancock County and elsewhere in the United States. This family represents an example of an emerging entrepreneurial class in Hancock County society that would establish a flourishing economy during the late Nineteenth Century.

The Koch Family letters represent a priceless, treasure trove of primary source material of local history of our county. The real hero in this story is Nettie, a frontier farmer's wife, who held together the family, and managed a farm and timber business, with a husband far away, sailing the seas. Nettie had to negotiate with Union

and Confederate cavalry that raided the countryside over and over, pursuing a strategy of survival in a war zone. There are probably many such women today in the Ukraine facing the same challenges for survival.

SOURCES:

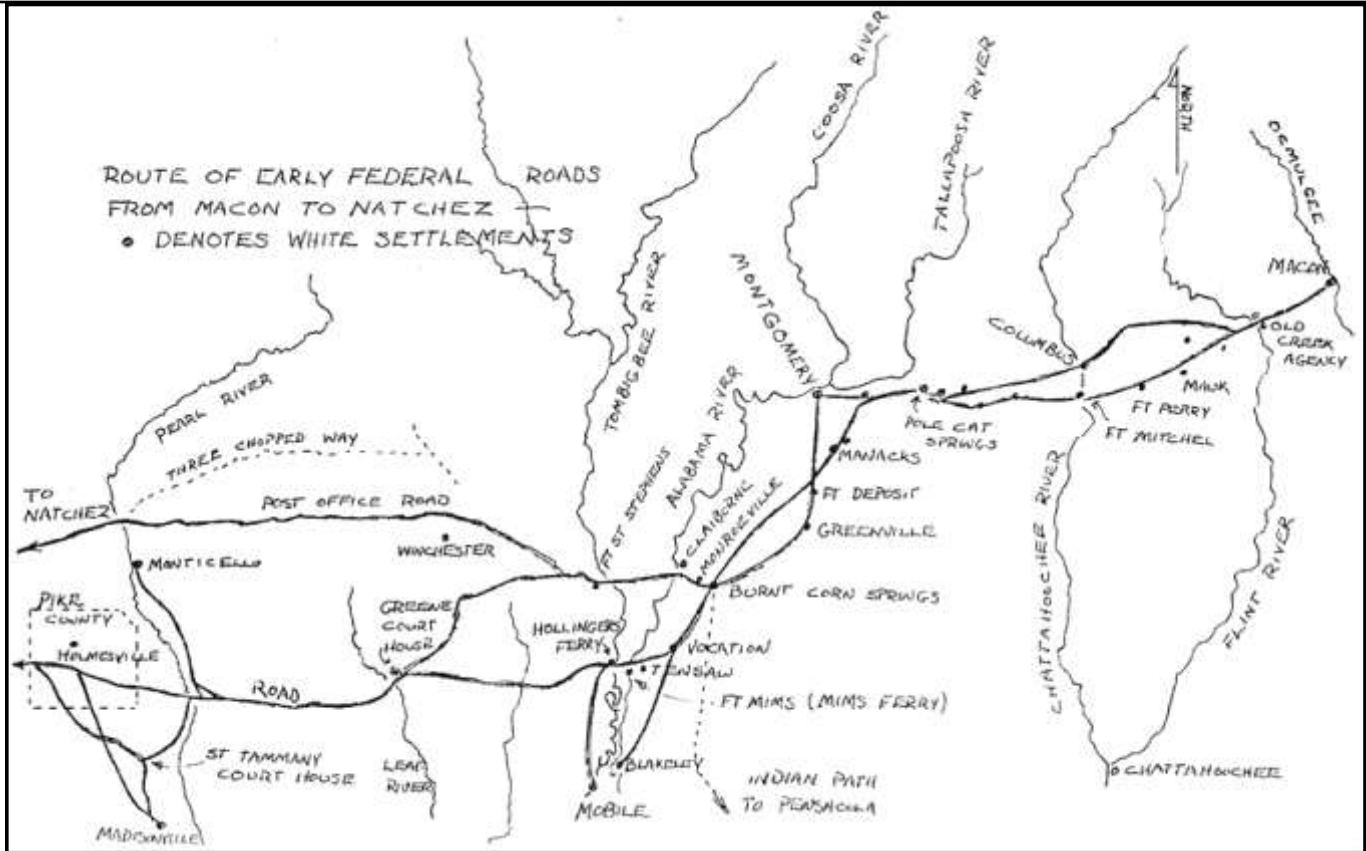
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Koch Family Cemetery May 2014



In this photo, Nettie Koch is seated with a granddaughter in her mule-driven wagon. An employee of the general store in Logtown is loading her recent purchase of groceries in the wagon.



OLD FEDERAL ROAD

By
James Keating, M.D.

At the turn of the Nineteenth Century, there were no good roads in the Mississippi Territory which included the land representing the present-day state of Alabama. A fort was built north of Mobile, Fort Stoddard, in 1799. This fort was located on the Tombigbee River at the southern border between American territory and the Spanish West Florida Colony which contained the city of Mobile. Southern Mississippi was Choctaw Country and the United States Government did not have permission to cross through that territory. Consequently, a peace treaty was negotiated with the Choctaw to allow a trail to be made across Mississippi from Natchez to Fort Stoddard for supply and troop deployment. This trail probably followed an ancient Indian byway that might match the course

of present-day Highway 98 (Natchez-McComb-Columbia-Janice-Fort Stoddard).

In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson purchased the Louisiana Colony from Napoleon. Jefferson then instructed his Indian Agent, Benjamin Hawkins, to negotiate an agreement with the Creek Indians to permit the creation of a "Horse Path" through their territory in Alabama for postal riders. A direct route from Washington, D.C., to New Orleans would reduce by five hundred miles the distance required for the delivery of mail. Mail at that time was carried from Washington, D.C., to Nashville to Natchez to New Orleans. In a 1805 Treaty of Washington the Creek Indians agreed to a narrow horse path.

By 1806 the Postmaster General contracted for the clearing of a four-foot-wide horse path from Athens, Georgia, to Fort Stoddard. The road was also being viewed as a future highway for the movement of troops if war should break out with Great Britain. In such a war the Creeks would ally with the English

against the Americans. The Choctaw would ally with the Americans against the English. Indian Agent Hawkins worked with the US Military to finish the horse path. He actually wanted to use Creek Indians as postal riders. The Creeks also wanted to establish primitive taverns or lodges for the riders which would be profit centers for the Indians. By 1810 bridges rather than toll ferries were constructed by the army over waterways to allow speedy transport of wagons. Unfortunately, the Creek War in 1813 suspended the use of this direct Washington to New Orleans postal route which had acquired the name of "The Old Federal Road."

Nevertheless, this road was useful for the transport of men and materiel for General Andrew Jackson in the War of 1812. As a matter of fact, just before the Battle of New Orleans in 1812, Jackson moved an army of approximately three thousand soldiers from Mobile through Pearlinton/Madisonville to New Orleans in just eleven days using the eastern part of this road in Mississippi. At Janice, in present day De Soto



The Old Federal Road passed through this section of Alabama.

National Park, Jackson’s army marched toward Hancock County going through Sellers on the Crane Creek-Necaise-Caesar Road, which was another ancient byway.

The Old Federal Road became the route through Alabama for the “Great Migration” of settlers to the “Old Southwest” in the first half of the Nineteenth Century. Early pioneer settlers like the Lees of Leetown, and the Smith, Hariel, and Shaw ancestors drove ox-driven wagons down the Old Federal Road, certainly in Alabama, to homestead in the northern part of Hancock County in communities such as Sellers, Crane Creek, Steep Hollow, and Necaise Crossing. As a matter of fact, the actual postal route of the Old Federal Road is less well established in Mississippi by historians because the intended route varies. In the original design, the horse path was to extend from Fort Stoddard from east to west just above the 31st parallel to the Pearl River. At that point the path would turn south to Madisonville on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. During the Great Migration travelers would turn south at different spots to find good sites for farming in the northern part of Hancock County. Please be careful not to

confuse the Old Federal Road with the Jackson Military Road that was completed in 1820 connecting Nashville with Madisonville, LA.

Thomas Jefferson appreciated the need for the Federal Government to invest in highway infrastructure to foster settlement of these newly acquired territories. Such roads in our history such as Daniel Boone’s Great Wilderness Road (the Cumberland Gap Road), the Natchez Trail, and the Oregon Trail were the vehicles of overland transportation that accomplished the “Manifest Destiny” of populating the United States from the Atlantic Ocean coast to the Pacific Ocean coast.

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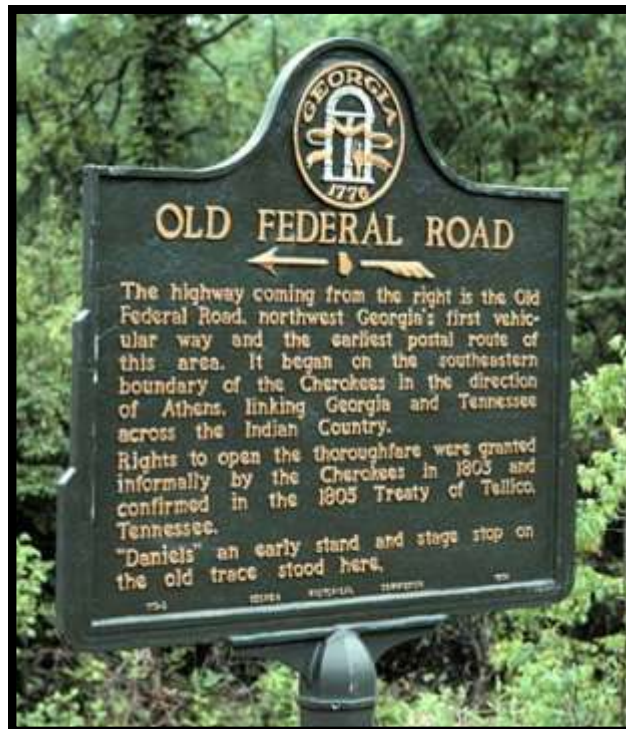
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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

By
Eddie Coleman

Visitors, new residents, and others often ask about the Pine Hills Hotel that once stood on the very northern part of the Bay of St. Louis in Harrison County. The hotel was built in the mid 1920’s, and it was hoped that Highway 90 would cross the Bay on its northern side. Alas, such was not the case. Highway 90 crossed the Bay at its midpoint from Pass Christian to Ulman Avenue in Bay St. Louis. The “crash of ‘29” brought about its closing. During WW II the US Army Engineers took up residence here until the end of the war. In 1953 it became a Catholic Seminary and Retreat Monastery until it closed in 1968. Unfortunately, Hurricane Camille in 1969 damaged the building. The land was bought by Du Pont which built its facility there in 1976. Today, it has more than 580 employees.

Google Pine Hills Hotel



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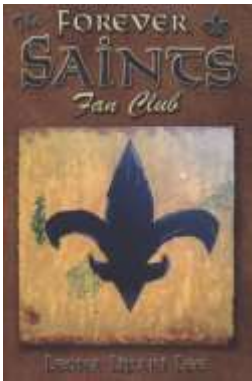
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An inspirational tribute to four New Orleans Saints fans and to the team they loved. This book is for anyone who is an avid Saints fan or who has lost a loved one who loved and was devoted to the Saints team. It is a joyful memoir and is sure to bring pleasure to Saints fans everywhere as it explores the life lessons learned by giving and receiving unconditional support and love. The Forever Saints Fan Club is about joy, hope, courage, devotion, love and faith.

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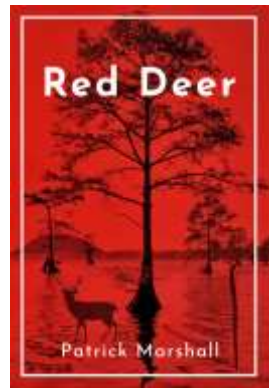
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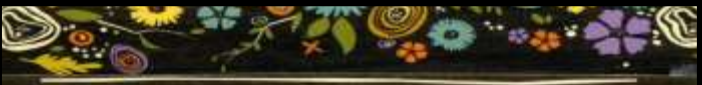
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