

THE

# HISTORIAN



OF HANCOCK COUNTY

[www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com)

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

January 2024

## COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, January 18, 2024, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. The guest speaker will be Jim Codling who will speak on Native Americans in Mississippi. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 228-467-4090. **Please call by noon on Wednesday, January 17,** 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 with Chef Michelle Nichols. The lunch menu is baked chicken, hash brown casserole, broccoli salad, sundae cake,



The Knights of Peter Cleaver, wearing their capes, sashes, feathered hats, and swords, lead a grand parade through Bay St. Louis from St. Rose de Lima Church to St. Augustine Seminary.

## St. Augustine Seminary Centennial Celebration

By  
Jim Schott

Just like on an autumn day one hundred years ago when over two thousand visitors from around the South flooded off trains arriving at the Bay St. Louis Depot, a hundred years later stepped down from large hotel touring buses, yellow school buses, cars and even occasional golf cart shuttles. They gathered in front of St. Rose de Lima Church. They formed a parade that was part of a two-day celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Augustine Seminary. It was the first institution in the Southern United States that trained

Black men for Catholic priesthood. Back at the opening in 1923, the "St. Augustine Messenger" reported the celebration as a "*Red Letter Day in the annals of St. Augustine's Mission House at Bay St. Louis, MS. It was the day of the dedication of this new Mission House; and in the history of the Catholic Church... a day that will be long remembered... as an epoch-making forward step. A grand parade was formed... and they marched through the business section of the town, then to the Seminary grounds.*"

Certainly October 29, 2023 was another "Red Letter Day" for the St. Augustine Seminary and Bay St. Louis because it was the one hundred year anniversary of its beginning. Repeating the scene from 1923 but with modern updates - unloading from buses and cars, hundreds of



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**LOBRANO HOUSE  
HOURS**

MONDAY — FRIDAY  
10:00AM — 3:00PM  
WEDNESDAY—10:00AM—  
5:00PM  
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.”

local and visiting Knights of Peter Claver and Ladies Auxiliary brightened the day in their suits of black or white, adorned with sashes and hats of various vivid colors – orange, blue, yellow, red, and purple. Along with a walking jazz band, they led a procession down Necaise Street to the seminary. Groups in the crowd proudly sported banners from their homes in the Louisiana cities of Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Lafayette, and the cities of Tallahassee, Florida, and Little Rock, Arkansas. There were also visitors from faraway places such as El Salvador. Dignitaries abounded including the Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word from Rome. Also included were Provincial Superiors from Illinois and California. In addition, Bishops and Archbishops from Memphis, TN, Mobile, AL, New Orleans, LA, Louisville, KY, Beaumont, TX, Little Rock, AR, Lafayette, LA, Baton Rouge, LA, and Biloxi, MS.

St. Augustine was the first seminary in the United States to train Black men for the priesthood. For the one hundred year anniversary, parade banners were carried by participants from Catholic churches throughout the United States. Among these banners was one for St. Katharine Drexel Parish in New Orleans. After the death of her father, Sister Katherine contributed so much of her monetary inheritance and energy to the successful establishment of St. Augustine Seminary. Another banner for Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Lafayette, LA, which in 1934 was the first parish to accept the Black priests from St. Augustine where other Bishops across the country refused. The first missions established by these priests from St. Augustine included the small towns of Maurice and Duson near Lafayette which have now grown into successful parish churches.

The 2023 event differed from 1923 in an important and mar-

velous way in that proud former students returned to recall and reflect upon how important the high school was to their growth and development. Most students who attended seminary ultimately did not choose to pursue a life as a priest or brother. But they still received an education not available to most young Black men in the South throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They were also exposed to professional Black men who set an example and created a culture that impacted them and Bay St. Louis.

Other comparisons and contrasts between the celebrations of 1923 and 2023 help to further understand the historic importance of St. Augustine Seminary and Bay St. Louis' role. Like 1923 when Pope Pius XI wrote a letter congratulating the SVD on the momentous opening, in 2023 Pope Francis sent a special letter and commemoration/blessing to the seminary. However, unlike in 1923 where the opening of the seminary was controversial not only in the South, but also in the United States Catholic Church, in 2023 Bishops and Archbishops from around the US attended and the US Congress presented a United States flag that flew over the Capital in Washington in honor of the St. Augustine centennial.

**A Conversation with Lions**

*“A Conversation with Lions” is a wonderful video by the 100 Men Hall in Bay St. Louis that describes this culture in interviews with elders from the African community of the town. They talk about St. Augustine, St. Rose de Lima, the Society of the Divine Word, and the atmosphere these institutions created and what it was like to be Black and Catholic in southern Mississippi.*

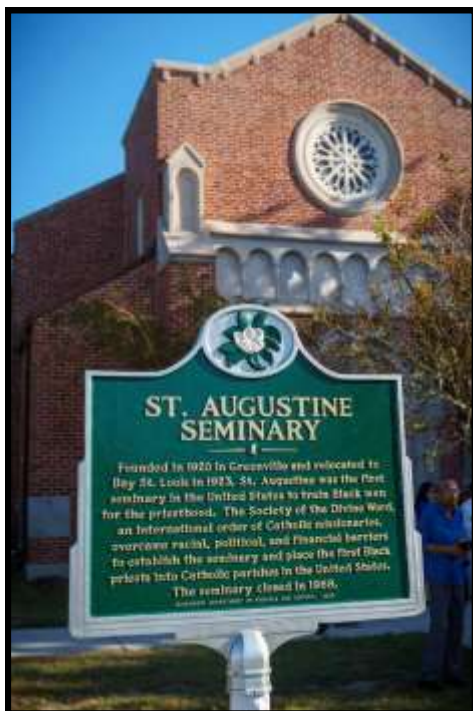
*Here is a link to the video “A Conversation With Lions that was produced by the 100 Men Hall. (Part 3)” on YouTube [www.youtube.com/watch?v=L\\_5Px13E53A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_5Px13E53A)*



The Ladies Auxiliary of the Knights of Peter Clavier march down Necaise Ave.



And finally, where unlike one hundred years ago, all the celebrants – priests, deacons, altar boys, and bishops were white men - this service included not only Black bishops and priests of North America who led mass, but hundreds of clergymen of diverse races and nationalities from around the world. A historic scene unimaginable in 1923 was made possible by the Society of the Divine Word, St. Augustine Seminary, and the Bay St. Louis community.



THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

2023 Year in Review

Part of the mission of our society is to raise public awareness regarding the cultural awareness of Hancock County.

This goal is achieved by publishing historical writings, public performances, and whimsical cardboard boat races.

Starting in the first quarter of 2023 (Q1), I portrayed Charles Gray as Honorary Grand Marshall of the Seahorse Lundi Gras parade. It was the Society's inaugural participation in the Rotary Club Chili Cook Off. Following in the March Second Saturday was "Super" Sundaes, where the "soda jerks" served up a variety of delicious ice cream treats.

Q-2 Featured our very entertaining and popular "What Floats Your Cardboard Boat" race where hundreds of spectators watched as over a dozen cleverly decorated boats navigate the course. Each year historical societies gather in Biloxi for the two-day Gulf Coast Historical Cultural Exhibition, and once again our display was one of the best and it provided visitors with details on the history of Hancock County and the Gulf Coast.

Q-3 HCHS had two outstanding and first-time events, the performance of the play *The Mercy Train* and the launching of Pat Murphy's book, *Growing Up Downtown Bay St. Louis*. *The Mercy Train* (The Orphan Train Movement) play was written and directed by our own Beverly Frater and Jim Codling and was such a success that additional performances were added to the schedule. The play also received a grant of \$2,500 which allowed the play to be offered with free admission.

As president of the Society, I was a member of Pat Murphy's advisory group that dealt with the publication, marketing, and distribution of *Growing Up Downtown*. The Society is responsible for both retail and wholesale distribution of the book and is compensated accordingly. Twelve hundred copies of the book were delivered to the Society, and as of this writing only sixty of the original printing remain for sale.

Q-4 The Society was a significant contributor to the promotional and historical content of the centennial celebration of the founding of Saint Augustine Seminary in Bay Saint Louis. October featured our always popular Cedar Rest Cemetery Tour with live actors portraying some of the historical residents of Hancock County. As part of November's Second Saturday and Space Day in the Bay, the Society presented a panel discussion and video presentation dealing with the founding of Stennis Space Center and the personal history of displaced families. We had a very successful open house on the Second Saturday in December including a book signing by Pat Murphy.

Other Notables this year include such things as

1. the HCHS website has a section where books at the Society may be purchased online
2. Charles Gray's and Russell Guerin's donations of \$100k and \$5k respectively
3. Lobrano House has a color printer, reflected in the beautiful photos in each monthly newsletter, a new roof, the front porch has new decking and paint, new fence lining the sidewalk, new electrical insulation, and a new "Smart" TV.

Proposed projects we look forward to in 2024 are

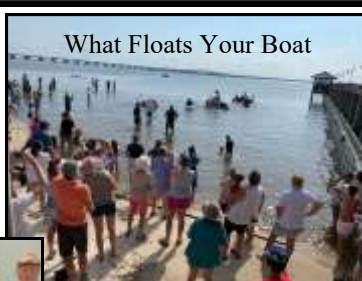
1. expanding merchandising offerings on the website
2. Stage production of the *Battle of the Bay of St. Louis*
3. Mississippi History Learning Experience at the Lobrano House
4. a book publication



Chris Roth  
President



Chili Cook Off



What Floats Your Boat



Gulf Coast Historical Cultural Exhibition



Cemetery Tour





**The Christmas Party and Installation of  
2024 Board of Directors**

Front row—left to right: Georgie Morton, Secretary; Chris Roth, President; Beverly Frater, Treasurer, Candee Canady, Archivist  
 Back row—left to right: Ron Thorp, Chairman of the House Committee; Bryan Frater, Membership and Fund Raising; Jim Codling, Historian and Parliamentarian; Jim Keating, Publicity Chairman  
 Not pictured—Bert Young, Audiovisual Tech





The four young men pictured are from St. Stanislaus. They came to the Historical Society on November 10, the feast day of St. Stanislaus, to volunteer service hours. Standing from left to right, the students are Nico Barvie, Carter Hopkins, Reeves Traxler, and L. R. Greene.

**MEMBERSHIP FEES**

It's time for current members to renew their memberships in the Historical Society and to encourage family and friends to join us, too. If your membership is due, your address label will read "Time to renew your membership." Please mail your renewal check to Hancock County Historical Society, P. O. Box 3356, Bay St. Louis, MS 39521. Or you may pay by credit card online at our website. Levels of membership and prices are listed on the back page of the newsletter.



THE SEASON BEGINS

**NEW MEMBERS**

David Michael Benvenuti  
*Bay St. Louis, MS*

Sam and Michelle Lusco  
*Houma, LA*

Bertin Chevis  
*Bay St. Louis, MS*

PK Lutken  
*St. Joseph, LA*

Nancy Downey  
*Long Beach, MS*

Laura Peterson  
*Kiln, MS*

Dr. Michael and Kathy Jennings  
*Lafayette, LA*

Jean Prescott  
*Bay St. Louis, MS*

Tommy and Penny Elkins  
*Bay St. Louis, MS*

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*Diamondhead, MS*

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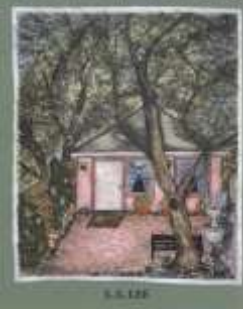
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Available at Amazon.com, Historical Society, and some local shops in Bay St. Louis

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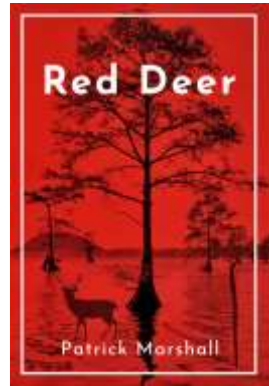
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