



# Rankin County Historical Society

Post Office Box 841  
Brandon, Mississippi 39043

[www.rankincountyhistory.org](http://www.rankincountyhistory.org)  
e-mail: [rchsinc@aol.com](mailto:rchsinc@aol.com)

## NEWSLETTER

July 2011

### Decision time meeting set for Tuesday

What one subject has occupied a spot on most agendas of the Rankin County Historical Society since 2005? You are absolutely right if you replied new roofs for the Museum buildings.

All of the structures and their contents were damaged by Katrina with the Goshen Post Office, the smokehouse and the outhouse being unusable. The roofs of the two main structures, the Atkins-McRae Store and the Wilson-Neely House, were over 20 years old and needing replacement pre-Katrina. The damage done by Katrina further weakened the buildings and has accelerated their deterioration in the past six years.

The board members under the leadership of President Anne Vanderleest have been taking long, hard looks at the reality of your historical society and are working to find a solution to the problems facing us in today's economy. On June 3, your current board held an all-day session with the stated purpose of the meeting being to discuss the vision, focus, mission and future of RCHS; two additional meetings have been held since that time. When RCHS was founded in 1978 one of its primary objectives was to "preserve and publicize the county's

history". Some four years later the Atkins-McRae Building was donated to the society and it was designated as a museum to house the society's growing collection of artifacts. The Neely House, the smokehouse and Goshen Post Office were donated at a later date.

The store and the house contain many irreplaceable artifacts that have been entrusted to the society over the years. Collecting, preserving, and sharing the artifacts and records pertaining to our Rankin County history was the mission set by the founders of our society; and this mission cannot be carried out as we understand it without adequate housing for these records and artifacts.

Our founders originally envisioned these buildings as being a part of a village showcasing life at the turn of the 20th century and highlighting Rankin County history. At that time the Agricultural Museum in Jackson did not exist. Over the years maintenance of the buildings and preservation of the artifacts has been a costly uphill climb; each administration of RCHS has struggled with this responsibility of upkeep, preservation, and sharing. The two items most needed to fulfill this mission being

*(Continued on page 2)*

RCHS July 2011

*(Continued from page 1)*

money and manpower. In taking stock of the buildings and their usage, the decision has been reached by the RCHS board to demolish the post office and the smokehouse. Any salvageable materials will be used in repairs to the two main buildings. This is not a decision that was made quickly; the board is well aware of the many hours of time and effort that have been given by our volunteer workers over the years to the upkeep of these buildings.

Bids for reroofing and repairs to the structures were requested from three contractors and these bids range from \$12,770 to \$17,460 to accomplish the basic renovations needed. Our next question becomes where do we find the funds as we are a non-profit organization; with our only income being from the sale of our history and cemetery books, calendars, and an occasional donation. We suspended the printing of the historical calendars in 2010 as we lost money on them during the last three years.

Two members of our board, Anne Vanderleest and Paul Davis, scheduled a presentation at the June meeting of the Rankin County Board of Supervisors asking if any assistance is available from the Board for the preservation and maintenance of the museum buildings. Members of the Board were interested in helping with this project but we were told further

study was needed to determine if financially assisting the RCHS could be undertaken legally by the Supervisors. Anne and Paul then met with the county's lawyers who advised the only way the Board of Supervisors could assist with our project is to enter into a trustee agreement with the county. By the time of our meeting on July 12 we hope to have full information on whether or not this agreement will benefit the historical society.

In looking at the future of the RCHS your board members are now asking how we can best uphold and reinforce our commitment to Rankin County history. How do we collect, preserve and continue sharing this rich history. One answer would be through digitization, making our historical artifacts available at the click of a mouse. Digitization, as with any image, captures and maintains the "now" extending our commitment to preserve and share with future generations.

Please plan to attend the general meeting on Tuesday, July 12, at 6:30 P.M. at the Brandon Library. This is a change of date from our usual schedule. Come ready to discuss options available to the RCHS; bring your questions, suggestions, and most importantly, solutions. If you are unable to attend the meeting, please share your thoughts with us by sending an e-mail to [rchsinc@aol.com](mailto:rchsinc@aol.com) or a note to RCHS, Post Office Box 841, Brandon, MS 39043.

**Officers of Rankin County Historical Society**

Anne Vanderleest, President, [jetplex@bellsouth.net](mailto:jetplex@bellsouth.net)

Paul Davis, Vice President, [polywog1@comcast.net](mailto:polywog1@comcast.net)

Joan Singletary, Secretary and Editor of Newsletter, [josing@bellsouth.net](mailto:josing@bellsouth.net)

Nathan Bradshaw, Member at Large, Post I, [jnbradshaw33@bellsouth.net](mailto:jnbradshaw33@bellsouth.net)

Mary Lou Ayers, Member at Large, Post II, [maryscemeteries@bellsouth.net](mailto:maryscemeteries@bellsouth.net)

Mel Corley, Past President, [corley650@aol.com](mailto:corley650@aol.com)

[rchsinc@aol.com](mailto:rchsinc@aol.com)

[www.rankinhistory.org](http://www.rankinhistory.org)