



# German-American Cultural Center Newsletter

A publication of the Friends of the GACC  
519 Huey P. Long Ave., Gretna, LA 70053

November 2020

## 2021 Is Just Around the Corner — So Is Our New Calendar!

Those were the good old days in Gretna – the days of family-owned stores on nearly every corner, railroads that brought industry and jobs, and the bustling downtown with businesses such as the A&P store and the Tower Theater. To celebrate that past, the GACC is presenting its 2021 calendar with historic photographs of Gretna and its partner village, McDonoghville.

Ira Hopkins of the GACC curated the photos for the new calendar, which follows up on the center's popular 2020 calendar, also filled with vintage images of Gretna's past. For 2021, the calendar includes several photographs from early McDonoghville.

"McDonoghville is on the cusp of being a historic district in Gretna," Hopkins said. "It has a rich history, so close to Gretna, and tied into Gretna by the railroads and river. It was a separate entity for a long time, and we wanted to honor that heritage."

Mechanikham was settled by German immigrants in 1836, followed by Gretna just next door a few years later. McDonoghville records its history beginning in 1815. The three villages became one Gretna in 1913.

### Family Stores on Every Corner

"The idea came to me when I bought my first digital camera and was walking around Gretna. I noticed all these 45-degree cuts in buildings -- it seemed like there was one on every corner. They are homes now but a lot of



them were altered very little," Hopkins said. These unusual corners had been the entrances to small stores that, back in the day, sold grocery items, candy, and sometimes sandwiches and desserts.

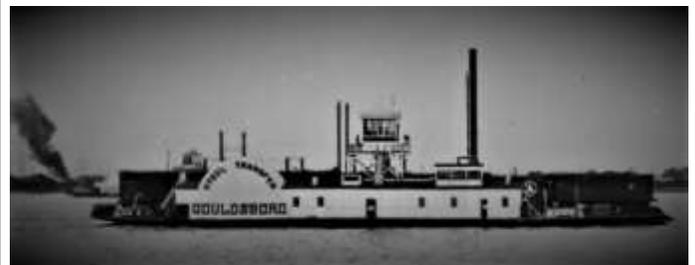
"I thought, wouldn't it be nice if we did some research and found early photos on those stores?" he said. "That led to the photo exhibit that we have, and to the calendar."

The 2021 calendar includes photos of family stores run by the Falcone family on Lafayette Street, the Hepting family on Copernicus (Huey P. Long), and the Kraus family on Burmaster in McDonoghville. There also are views of the interiors of the Falcone and Hepting stores. (Continued on Page 2)

### Do You Know Whose Headstone This is?



He's one of Gretna's early German immigrants. See page 5 to read about him and his family.



The Gouldsboro transfer ferry, pictured in the GACC 2021 Calendar, had a Civil War past. (From the Charles L. Franck Studio Collection, Historic New Orleans Collection)

## 2021 Calendar: Photos of Early Gretna Stores, Downtown and Railroads

(Continued from Page 1)

### Founded With the Railroad Industry

Hopkins continued, “The next thing you know, as we were researching stores, we ran into a lot of pictures of the

#### **BUY A CALENDAR!**

The GACC’s 2021 Calendar will be available soon for a \$15 donation. An email message will go out when they are delivered, or you can call the Center at 363-4202 to check if they have arrived.

downtown area, the Tower Theater, the ferry landing, and train ferries.”

What’s a train ferry, you may ask? Before the Huey P. Long Bridge was built in the 1930s, there was only one way for trains to

cross the Mississippi River – aboard transfer ferries and barges that transported trains (including passenger trains) from McDonoghville and Algiers to New Orleans.

“Molasses, bricks, oil and chemicals were manufactured on the West Bank and had to be transported east,” he said. That meant busy times for two sidewheeler transfer ferries out of McDonoghville called the *L.S. Thorne* and the *Gouldsboro*, and a huge transfer barge called the *Mastodon* that operated out of Algiers.

The *Gouldsboro* has quite a back story ... it had served as a union gunship during the Civil War. Then named the *U.S.S. Chickasaw*, it saw action in the battle of Mobile Bay. After the war it was refitted to serve as one of McDonoghville’s steel transfer ferries. In 2003, crews working on the levee near Gretna came across the old



One of the 2021 Calendar images is of the Kraus Store in the 1930s, located on Burmaster Street in McDonoghville from the early 1900s to the early 1960s, when it was lost to street widening. (Photo provided by Marjorie Kraus)

ferry, sunk in the river, where it still lies today.

“Railroads were major employers in Gretna,” Hopkins added. “If you look at old maps and old photos, you see the bars, boarding houses and gaming houses that supported the railroad industry and its employees.”

The 2021 calendar gives a window into Gretna’s past. The photos in the new calendar, along with other archival images, soon will be added to the photo display in the GACC Museum.

Hopkins said, “There is so much we want to share about Gretna’s history. The more we research it, the more we discover. It’s too rich not to share.”

## Lighting Up Huey Long Avenue for the Holiday Season



For the second year, Gretna has its own light festival for the holidays. The trees along Huey P. Long Avenue are full of bright lights. And there’s a large Christmas tree on the Huey Green near Sixth Street.

Because of Covid-19, there won’t be the usual Gretna Christmas event, but the Christmas tree lighting will take place on Sunday, Dec. 6, at 6 p.m. for everyone to drive by and enjoy the holiday scenery.



## Gretna History ... Remembering Crescent Park

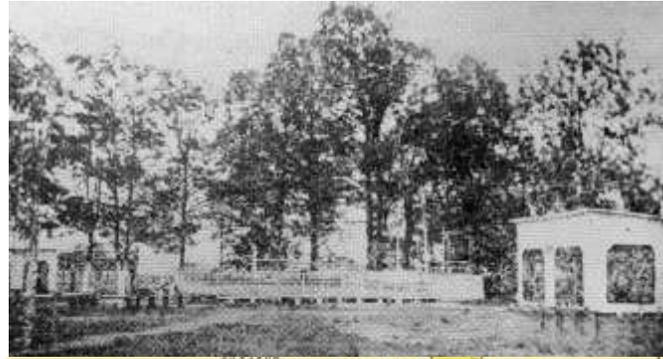
Once upon a time, the people of Gretna, and perhaps some New Orleanians who took the ferry across the river, gathered on weekends at Crescent Park. The spacious lawn, with a large dance hall and bar, was along the river, at Front (First) Street and Delhonde Street in Gretna.

In Mary Grace Curry's book, "Gretna — A Sesquicentennial Salute," she wrote that the park was described as "a popular resort" and "becoming more and more, the pride of Gretna's pleasure seekers."

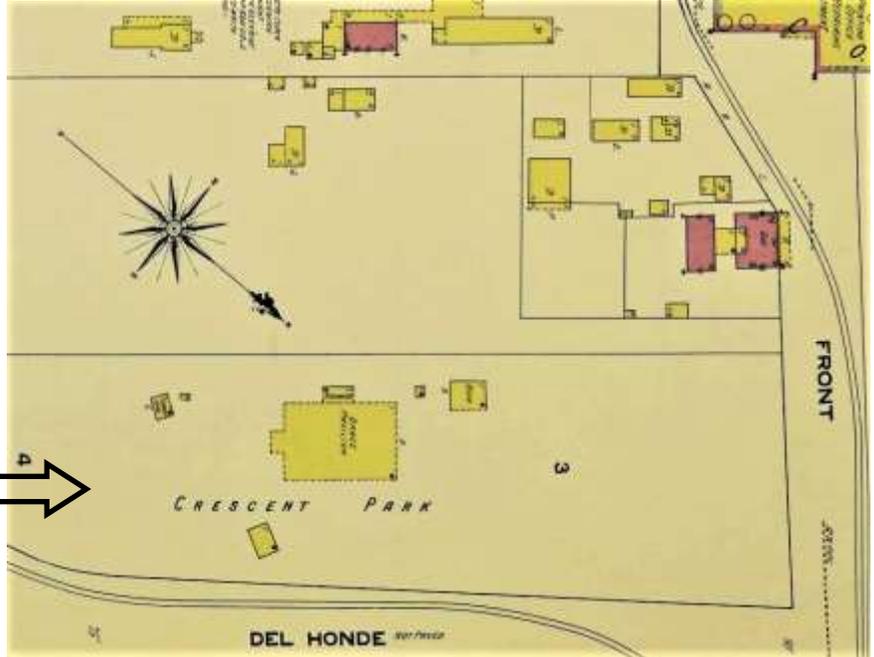
It was estimated that every Sunday, as many as 2,000 people visited the park, just a few blocks from the ferry. For many years, it was the site of the annual David Crockett Fire Company Picnic after the annual firemen's parade. It also hosted political rallies and other community functions.

In 2014, New Orleans opened a new Crescent Park along the river in the Bywater-Marigny area.

Around 1900, where Jefferson Parish buildings now sit, was Crescent Park. It was located along Delhonde Street at Front (First) Street, with a river view. This Sanborn map from 1906 (Library of Congress) shows where the pavilion was.



This rare photo (left) provides a look at Crescent Park and its pavilion along the riverfront, circa 1904.



## Here's a Winter Recipe With a German Flair: Bavarian Lentil Soup

If you're looking for a hearty dish for cooler nights, try this Bavarian Lentil Soup. Lentils are legumes—cousins to beans, chickpeas, soybeans and peanuts. They come in several types but this recipe uses brown lentils, commonly used in North America, which have a mild and earthy flavor and ability to hold their texture after being cooked.



### Bavarian Lentil Soup

Smoky bacon, sharp leeks, and a splash of vinegar add bold flavor to this traditional German lentil soup recipe.

*Yield:* 6

*Prep Time:* 10 minutes

*Cook Time:* 55 minutes

*Total Time:* 1 hour 5 minutes

### Ingredients

4 oz. sliced bacon, roughly chopped  
 1/2 c. diced onion  
 1/2 c. diced leeks (white parts only)  
 1/2 c. diced celery  
 1/2 c. diced carrots  
 1 qt. chicken broth  
 1 1/2 c. brown lentils  
 1 tsp. thyme  
 2 bay leaves  
 1/2 tsp. black pepper  
 1/4 tsp. nutmeg  
 2 c. diced raw yellow potatoes  
 2 Tbsp. white vinegar  
 1 Tbsp. sugar  
 Salt to taste

### Instructions

Heat a Dutch oven or other heavy

bottomed pot over medium heat. Cook the bacon until the fat has rendered into the pot and the bacon is crispy.

Add the onions, leeks, celery, and carrots to the pot. Saute five minutes, or until golden.

Pour in the broth and scrape any of the brown bits on the bottom of the pot with a wooden spoon. Add the lentils, thyme, bay leaves, pepper, and nutmeg. Cook for 30 minutes on medium, covered.

Add the potatoes and cook 15 minutes more until lentils and vegetables are tender. Stir in vinegar and sugar, then add salt to taste. Serve with warm bread. For a special treat, serve along with homemade German spaetzle!

## New Pastor for German Church Service



Rev. Stephen Craft

The German Church Service (Deutscher Gottesdienst) of New Orleans has a new pastor, the Rev. Stephen Craft. A native of New Orleans and a graduate of Tulane University, he has been an Episcopal priest for 28 years. For the past 16 years, he has been rector of St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Algiers.

He replaces the Rev. Richard B. Easterling, who has served the congregation since September 2015. Pastor Easterling, who also served as rector and dean at St. George's Episcopal Church in New Orleans, is leaving the city to become Priest in Charge of St. James Episcopal Church in Florence, Italy.



Rev. Richard Easterling

The German service is held at 2 p.m. on the first Sunday of each month (except July and August) at Central St. Matthew United Church of Christ, 1333 S. Carrollton Ave. in New Orleans.

"I could not be more pleased with this development, as Father Steve has been a long-time friend, colleague and mentor of mine," Pastor Easterling

wrote to the friends of the German Church Service. "In Father Craft you will find a gifted intellectual, a stirring preacher, and a caring pastor."

## YES, WE'RE OPEN!

**The GACC Museum is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wednesday through Saturday. Come and visit, and tell your friends!**

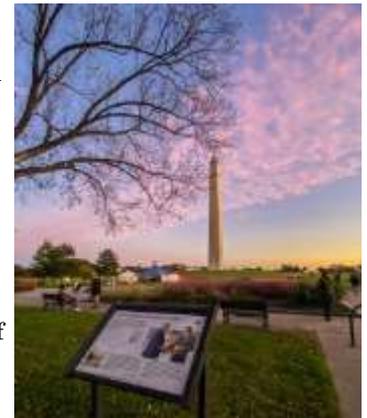


## Friendship Garden in D.C. Celebrates U.S.-Germany Ties

In Washington, D.C., on Constitution Avenue between the White House and the Washington Monument, is a special spot that celebrates the long-standing relationship between the U.S. and Germany. It's the German-American Friendship Garden, filled with flowers and plants native to both countries.

The garden was commissioned to commemorate the 300th anniversary of German immigration to America and jointly dedicated by President Ronald Reagan and Chancellor Helmut Kohl on November 15, 1988.

In 2013, the German Embassy, the National Park Service, the Trust for the National Mall, the Association of German-America Societies and the German-American Heritage Foundation signed a Memorandum of Understanding committing to preserving the beauty of this garden. The garden was first restored in 2013. In 2019 perennial beds, plants and flowers were planted and revitalized. (Source: Germany in USA Newsletter)



### In Memorium: Charles Schech

Former GACC board member Charles Thomas Schech passed away on November 12, 2020, at the age of 84. He was the husband of the late Mattie Muller Schech. A resident

of Belle Chasse, Louisiana, for 50 years, he worked for Plaquemines Parish Mosquito Control for many years and also sold auto parts. The son of the late Joseph I. Schech and Katie Dutsch Schech, he was the father of Thomas John Schech and his wife, Marsha; Joseph Mat Schech and his wife Marie; and Shawn Errol Schech and his wife Sheila.

## GACC Continues Its Support for 'Kulturabend' Programs Presented at Deutsches Haus

The Board of Directors of the German-American Cultural Center has continued its long tradition of providing support for the Kulturabend program at Deutsches Haus in New Orleans. The board voted in October to donate \$2,000 toward Kulturabend, a German Cultural Evening of lectures, concerts, and films held at Deutsches Haus, 1700 Moss Street in New Orleans. The next program will be on Thursday, December 17, from 7 to 8:30 p.m., when Brigitta Malm and Rose Mancini will discuss German Christmas traditions.



# Meet The Immigrants

*A column spotlighting German families, part of research by genealogist Pat Smith*

**Frank Ward Sr.**  
 Born in 1837 in Cologne, Germany  
 Died in 1895 in Gretna

**Wilhelmina Kersting**  
 Born in 1842 in St. Louis, Missouri  
 Died in 1916 in Gretna

Frank and Wilhelmina married in 1860. He served in the Civil War on the Union side, enlisting in 1862, and was wounded in a battle at Port Hudson, Louisiana. The 1880 census shows that he and his family lived in McDonoghville. **Their children:** Julia, Caroline Rosalie "Lena", Ida Johanna Catherine, Louisa Elizabeth, Sophie Louise, Michel "Shelly", Cecelia "Seeley", Ignatius "Nottz", Frank A., John George, William and Elizabeth.



The Ward tomb in McDonoghville Cemetery.

### GACC Staff:

**Carol Schlueter, Director**  
**Ira Hopkins, Cultural Center Assistant**

The **GACC Newsletter** is published monthly. Suggestions are welcome; email them to [germanamerican@bellsouth.net](mailto:germanamerican@bellsouth.net), or call newsletter editor **Carol Schlueter**, 504-363-4202.

### **The Board of the Friends of the GACC**

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**Don't forget to renew your GACC membership!**



### Membership Form

Yes, I want to renew my membership.  
 Yes, register me as a new member in The Friends of the GACC.  
 Yes, I would like to Volunteer .

#### All Memberships are \$20:

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This fine old home at 629 Lafayette Street in Gretna was built by Charles E. Spahr Sr. (1896-1950), who was manager of an oil company and raised his family there. Later, it was purchased by French M. Jordan (1907-1999), a West Bank businessman who served one term in the Louisiana State Senate starting in 1960. He also had an unsuccessful run for lieutenant governor. A native of Texas who moved to the West Bank in 1944, Senator Jordan was active in civic affairs, serving as a king of the Grela Mardi Gras krewe. He was a member of the Harvey Canal Industrial Association and the State Mineral Board. Today the home is occupied by Bowman & Howley law firm. (Photo by Ira Hopkins)



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