



GERMAN-AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER NEWSLETTER

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

April 2021
Issue

Are You Ready for Maifest??

Mark SATURDAY, MAY 15, on your calendars! After more than a year without festivals, the GACC will host our Maifest Beer Garden on the 5th Street parking lot that day, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.



There will be grilled brats, our homemade sauerkraut, fresh baked pretzels and German beer and wine.



Dr. Eric Hahn and his band will be playing your favorite tunes. Join us on May 15 to see your GACC and Gretna friends ... wear your German costumes!

Please Note: We must abide by Louisiana's Phase 3 Covid requirements

Elmer's Brings German Candy Traditions to Holidays

What would the Easter holiday be without a Gold Brick Egg? It's the first thing some of us look for around the holiday to add to an Easter basket for the little ones or for older folks to enjoy. This chocolate confection is just one of the delicious products whose roots stemmed from a German immigrant who came to New Orleans to start a new life.



The company that became Elmer's opened in 1855 in New Orleans, started by German immigrant Christopher Henry Miller, a pastry chef who came here at age 16 to seek his fortune. It was

originally the Miller Candy Company, but the name changed to Elmer Candy Corporation around 1914 when Miller's son-in-law, August Elmer, and his five sons came into the business.

In 1923 the company bought the recipe for "Heavenly Hash," a chocolate covered marshmallow confection, from a Canal Street department store. In 1936, they started producing their Gold Brick, a milk chocolate bar covered with chopped pecans.

In the 1960s, Roy Nelson purchased the confectionery business from the Elmer family and moved operations to Ponchatoula, La., concentrating on seasonal chocolates. Today, Elmer Chocolate is run by the third generation of Nelsons. It is one of the oldest family-owned candy companies and is the second-largest heart box manufacturer in the country. In 2016, the company expanded its facility footprint by adding an additional 70,000 square feet to its already 330,000 square-foot factory.

Thanks to the original ideas by Christopher Miller and the August Elmer family, and the foresight of the Nelson family, generations of New Orleans area candy lovers will continue to enjoy Elmer's chocolate confections on holidays such as Easter, Valentine's Day and Christmas.



Elmer's first building at Jackson Avenue and Levee Street in New Orleans.

All photos are from old-new-orleans.com



Left: Elmer's early retail store had all sorts of candy on display. Right: The production line works to assemble candy boxes.



The Brunies Home — A 1916 Treasure

The 200 block of Newton Street is dominated by a large, two-story white home that dates back to 1916 when it was built by the Brunies family. They owned a restaurant nearby at 700 Second Street, operated by Herman Brunies. The restaurant is no more; its location is now a bank parking lot.

The house is a contributing element to the Gretna National Historic Register district. The 3,000-square-foot, two story home also has a large paneled attic.

Interestingly, the house on the left of the Brunies home was owned by another Gretna restaurant family, the Butiriches, whose café was on Huey P. Long Avenue.

In recent years, the Brunies home was owned by a local lawyer who had an office at street level. It has been up for sale since 2018, but recently the sale has been listed as “pending.” We hope the new owner will preserve and protect it for the future. *(Check page 5 for more information on the Brunies family.)*



Above: The Brunies home on Newton Street. (Photo by Ira Hopkins)

Right: An ad for the restaurant from the 1937 issue of the *Jefferson Parish Review*.



GACC Director Carol Schlueter, left, spoke at the Rotary Club of the West Bank luncheon on April 6 at Timberlane Country Club. At right is Kevin Avery, club president. Her topic was “From Mechanikham to Gretna: The German Immigrants Who Settled in Southeast Louisiana.”

Volksfest at Deutsches Haus

For German music, food and fun, plan to head to Deutsches Haus, 1700 Moss Street in New Orleans, on Friday, April 30, and Saturday, May 1, for Volksfest. Doors open at 4 p.m. on Friday, with a Maypole ceremony at 6 p.m. and music by Bier Musikanten band and Schnitzelbank Lasse. The fest closes at 10 p.m.

On Saturday, doors open at 11 a.m., with the opening ceremony and keg tapping at noon. The Maypole ceremony is at 12:30, followed by Volkslauf, a traditional German group walk, at 1 p.m. The Hund Parade with dogs in costume is at 1:30, with the two bands performing during the day and evening. It closes at 10 p.m.

German food will be available, including a two-wurst plate with mashed potatoes, red cabbage and sauerkraut, and varieties of German beer and wine.



Calendar's Streetcar Photo Reunites Two Cousins

Jeffrey Stromeier of Metairie read about the GACC's 2021 calendar and learned that a photo of his relative,



This Gretna-Algiers Streetcar has George Strohmeier, right, and Eddie Debartlo at the controls. It was featured as the January photo in the 2021 GACC calendar.

George Strohmeier, was in one of the pictures. Jeffrey came into the museum to purchase a calendar, and happened to meet Ray Gibson, the GACC member who had donated the streetcar photograph. Ray's grandfather was George Strohmeier, a motorman for the Gretna-Algiers Streetcar who is pictured in the 1920s-era photo shown at the left.



Jeffrey Stromeier, left, and Ray Gibson, long-lost cousins.

It turns out that Ray and Jeffrey are cousins, but they had never met. While Ray's family lived in Gretna (and by the way, spelled the family name Strohmeier with an "H"), Jeffrey's family lived on the East Bank and always spelled the name Stromeier, without the "H." Nonetheless, the two men are related, and both were thrilled to connect for the first time, thanks to the GACC calendar and its historic photographs.

Is Your German Family History Linked to the German Coast?



This is an example of the 300th anniversary yard signs.

Three hundred years ago, the first Germans arrived in Louisiana, settling along the Mississippi River near the current communities of Killona and Taft. The German pioneers eventually dispersed on both sides of the river in St. Charles and St. John the Baptist parishes, which came to be called the German Coast.

To commemorate those 1721 German settlers, the German-Acadian Coast Historical & Genealogical Society has developed colorful yard signs that can carry the family names of those immigrants. If your family has German Coast roots, you may want to purchase and display a sign in your yard.

The signs can be ordered on the society's website, <http://gachgs.com/>.

The website explains, "Here at the GACHGS we happily celebrate 300 years of the arrival of

the Germanic progenitors who settled in Louisiana. To commemorate this mutual inheritance, the GACHGS is inviting members as well as more than 1,000,000 descendants of these first pioneers to participate in a year-long demonstration of shared familial relationships with our German Coast cousins, both near and far."

You can choose a surname to appear on the yard sign by checking that web link. Three different sizes are available, at a cost of \$25, \$50 or \$100. Completed signs must be picked up at Laura Plantation in Vacherie, Louisiana.



1775 Map of the German Coast.

Meet The Immigrants

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



Richard Brunias (Brunies)

Born in 1832 in Switzerland

Both are buried in Lafayette Cemetery No. 1 in New Orleans.

Sophie Wesser

Born in 1845 in Baden-Wurtemberg, Germany

Richard and Sophie lived on Tchoupitoulas Street in New Orleans and owned a “retail confectionary.” Their children were Henry R., Richard, Sophia E., Cicilie, Richard Otto, Louise A., John P., Albert B. and Herman, who owned a restaurant on Newton Street in Gretna. His brother Henry, a baker, had several children who were prominent jazz musicians.

The Brunias tomb in Lafayette Cemetery No. 1.

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

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In 1938, work was under way on the new Gretna post office at Huey P. Long Avenue and Fourth Street. Pittman Brothers Construction Company did the work at a cost of \$50,500. Today it's no longer a postal facility, but it has been restored and converted to the Gretna Cultural Center for the Arts, hosting such events as concerts, plays and receptions. (Photo from the Jefferson Parish Review)

REMINDER

**Don't Forget to Pay
Your GACC Dues for
2021!**



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German-American
Cultural Center**
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Museum open 10 am - 3 pm, Wed-Sat
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