

Habetz, Clara



German American Traditions

Miss Clara Habetz resided in Rayne, Louisiana. She was born in 1914, in Roberts Cove and learned her German traditions from her parents. She kept the German language alive in her family by encouraging relatives to speak German at home and by corresponding with relatives in German. Mrs. Clara visited Germany twice and was soon later asked to act as an interpreter for German visitors.

As a community leader, she was very active. Habetz served as a sacristan at the St. Leo Catholic Church for forty years, cook and housekeeper for the rectory for the last forty-five years, and an organist for the church choir for more than fifty years. Miss Habetz served in community leadership positions, including president of the Acadia Parish Homemakers' Council.

Miss Habetz and the St. Leo Catholic Church's choir maintained German culture by singing German hymns, carols, and folk songs. For more than fifty years, the community celebrated the coming of the Christmas season with an Old World St. Nicholas celebration. On December fourth, the eve of the feast of St. Nicholas, members representing Santa Claus, St. Nicholas, and Black Peter (a Turkish boy who assists St. Nicholas); visit homes where they are welcomed with lavish meals. Santa Claus and Black Peter then enter and give the children candy, and the choir sings carols in German.

The Roberts Cove community members demonstrated the St. Nicholas procession at the 1992 Louisiana Folk Festival and the St. Leo Choir performed, singing many German carols. Miss. Clara Habetz passed away August 22, 2006.

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