

# CORNFLOWER PETAL

The official newsletter of the German-American Steuben Parade of New York and the German-American Friendship Month

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## The Bar is High

Parade wants to repeat success



The preparations for the next German-American Steuben Parade are picking up speed, and the bar is high. The 2008 parade was very successful and the whole Parade Committee is striving to make this year's events even better. So let's recall last year's events.

For the Steuben Parade Committee the year started in February. For the first time ever all the Chairpersons of the Subcommittees met for a planning weekend in a hotel in Westchester. For two days everybody worked really hard in order to improve the parade and all the surrounding events. It was a fruitful meeting and many new

and interesting ideas came up on this weekend.

The weekend was also an opportunity for the new Chairpersons to get to know the people they would be working so closely with for the next several months. And there were quite a few new faces among the participants of the planning weekend. Float Co-Chairpersons

Bob Radske and Doris Neugebauer held their positions for the first time, as were Lineup Chairman Eric Hoffman, Queen-Committee-Chairwomen Connie Rom and Nicole Radske and PR-Chairwoman Tanja Ohlson.

Planning the parade was put on hold for a weekend in April, when the German Pope Benedict XVI visited New York City. A handful of representatives of the German-American community first greeted the Holy Father on Fifth Avenue. He came up the Parade route in his Pope mobile and the Holy Father discovered the small group of people in Tracht in between thousands of others who frantically celebrated the religious leader and waved happily.

The next day, a group of parade members were lucky enough to receive tickets for Yankee Stadium, where Pope Benedict celebrated a mass in front of 60 000 people. For those in attendance it was one of the highlights of the German-American year.



Even though this was the first official activity of parade members, the first event organized by the Parade Committee did not happen until May 4<sup>th</sup>. During the crowning at Franklin Square, the new Miss German-America, Melissa Gratzl, took the crown from Christina Rom. The new princesses were Kathryn Pando and Andrea Kruzynski. Sydney

Schaefer Froehlich, Ava Starace and Michelle Mattern were crowned junior princesses.

With the crowning over, everyone on the team felt that the pressure was on- the parade was coming closer. And the pressure kept rising when Chairman Lars Halter revealed the Grand Marshals only a few weeks later. For the first time, the parade committee had chosen three Grand Marshals, who each represented a different aspect of German-American friendship. Col. Gail Halvorsen, also known as the Candy Bomber, represented the historical friendship, Duncan Niederauer, CEO of the New York Stock Exchange stood for the business relations between the two countries and actor Ralf Möller is a successful German in Hollywood, entertaining millions with movies like „Gladiator“ or „Beerfest“.

In addition to these honorees Chairman Lars Halter could also win a special partner for the parade: the Bundesland (State of) Hessen. We are glad that we could welcome special guest Volker Hoff from there.

The following months were filled with planning and meetings, urgent phone calls and numerous emails, laughter and sometimes a lot of frustration. But then September came around and in the end everything had been worth it.

September was once again declared German-American Friendship Month by Mayor Michael Bloomberg. But before the reception at which the declaration was celebrated, Friendship Month kicked off with a brand-new event. For the first time, the Parade Committee

had organized a special dinner. It was held at historic Fraunces Tavern, a restaurant that General von Steuben and President George Washington frequented in their days. The five-course-meal got an extra-special touch from the accompanying beers brewed by Hofbräu. A different brew was carefully paired with each dish, even with dessert! The dinner was an instant hit and will sure be a new staple in future years.

Friendship Month went on with one highlight after the other. All in all, it was a very successful month again and most events were very well-received. For Chairman Lars Halter and his team it was a very busy month, and soon enough, it was Parade weekend. This year, it started earlier than usual, already on Thursday afternoon, when 15 representatives had the honor of ringing the closing bell at the New York Stock Exchange. For those who were able to attend, it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Standing on the little balcony in what people call the financial capital of the world and end trading was amazing. A potential 2 billion people worldwide could watch the live broadcast. Also, that Thursday was one of the last days with huge gains for American stocks.

The Friday of the parade weekend started with some welcoming words from the Mayor and representatives of the five boroughs of New York City at City Hall Park. On a day with perfect sunshine the outfits and uniforms of the guests from abroad made the park glow in a colorful light.

In the evening it was the Hilton Hotel where the dresses shone,

the glasses clinked and the beautiful ladies were swirled around the dancefloor during the traditional banquet. It was then that the Grand Marshals were officially presented and for many participants that's when the Parade starts. Linda Schmidt did a fabulous job leading through an evening of good food, talk and lots of laughter.

Then the Parade was finally here and it started with a church service at St. Patrick's Cathedral held in English and German. The costumes of the parade participants did not only make for a special audience in the old church, but they raised a lot of interest from tourists and bystanders inside and outside the historic walls.

It was exactly noon when Chairman Lars Halter, together with the Grand Marshals and special guests, blew into their whistles and thus started the 51<sup>st</sup> annual German-American Steuben Parade. More than 100,000 visitors enjoyed the songs of the marching bands, the Trachten, uniforms and dances, and of course the floats depicting important scenes in German-American history or just reminding the audience of traditions of the "Alte Heimat". Many parade participants and viewers ended the festivities of the day in Central Park, where they could enjoy German food and drinks. The Parade weekend ended with the Oompah Fest at Franklin Square, and many of

the groups and bands from Germany paid a visit to the German club on Long Island.

After all the efforts climaxed in the banquet, parade and Friendship Party, the hectic times were over for the Parade Committee members. Much needed calm and rest ruled for the remainder of the year, and families and friends, neglected in the weeks prior to the big events, were once again the center of attention while the empty batteries were recharged.

But by now the batteries are full again, and everyone feels the urge to give their best so that the 52<sup>nd</sup> Steuben Parade on September 19<sup>th</sup> 2009, will be at least as successful as the previous one.

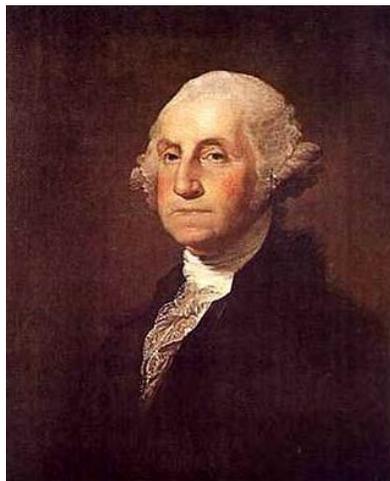
## Why Presidents Day is important for the German-American community

### Here are a few thoughts on Presidents Day by Chairman Lars Halter

When I left work this past Friday I found myself in the elevator of my building with a colleague. When the doors opened on the ground floor, I said: Have a nice weekend, and a happy Presidents Day. He looked at me like I had made a joke. "You are German", he said. "Presidents Day doesn't mean anything to you, I guess."

He was very wrong. If you live in this country - as a German, a German-American, or an American - you should care about Presidents Day. I personally do, and I know that my fellow German-Americans do as well. They come together every year to celebrate this holiday - and to debate whose life and legacy it is all about.

Most would think it is all about George Washington, the founding father of our country -



and in a way they would be right. Presidents Day was originally established as

"Washington's Birthday", and a name-change to include Abraham Lincoln or more of our great leaders has failed in the Senate.

But is it really such a good idea to honor only one man's life when so many have shaped this country?

To be sure, George Washington holds a very special place in history - he was not only our first President, but also the General who led the young American army to victory over the British in the Revolutionary War.

With the help of a certain

German immigrant, by the way... but more about that later.

At his funeral ceremony in 1799, the Governor of Virginia, Henry Lee, said about Washington:

“Of all Americans he was first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.”

Indeed, George Washington knew when the time was right for an uprising against the colonial power of the British crown. But as soon as the war was won, he was instrumental in crafting the “Peace Treaty of Paris”, then resigned his position as Commander in Chief and retired to the life of a free American citizen.

The legacy of George Washington as President is vast – but others followed and have also left their mark.

Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy...

On Presidents Day we should reflect on all their lives and pay our respects.

For that, we have to analyze how important the work and leadership of any given President is

from our own perspective.

As German-Americans, we have an interesting point of view on how several US Presidents have impacted our very own history.

George Washington entrusted his Army and the fate of the nation-to-be to a certain Prussian General. His bet paid off, as we all know.

General Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben trained Washington’s troops and enabled them to win the war against the seemingly overwhelming enemy.

Washington’s last deed as Commander in Chief was to write a letter to his Inspector-General thanking him and praising him for his service.



Almost a century after Washington, President Abraham Lincoln also relied on a German immigrant:

Carl Schurz, one of the famous 48ers, who had fought for Freedom and Democracy in the Revolution in Germany.

He was charged with getting the votes in the German-speaking community. Upon becoming President, Lincoln sent Schurz as Ambassador to Spain, where Schurz dissuaded the Spanish from supporting the South in the Civil War.

Schurz – through the influence he had on Lincoln – helped shape America.

He (Schurz) reappeared in 1877 when another President – Rutherford Hayes – called upon the German to serve as Secretary of the Interior. It was the highest political office awarded to a German at that point.

German born immigrants never rose higher. But several Americans of German descent led our country from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century on.

Grover Cleveland was the descendant of German Quakers. Herbert Hoover was the son of a blacksmith who was very proud of his German roots.

And Dwight Eisenhower was able to trace his family’s roots back to 18<sup>th</sup> Century Saarland.

Of course, a great German-American is not defined by heritage alone.

One can be a great German-American with no blood relation at all.

Just take John F. Kennedy. In the summer of 1963, Kennedy visited Berlin and gave a historic speech against the communist regimes of Russia and East Germany – culminating in his famous words: “Ich bin ein Berliner.”

JFK’s visit was the first step in the German-American dialogue that would ultimately lead to the reunification of Germany.

Another important step was taken in 1987, when Ronald Reagan journeyed to the divided city.

Standing near the Brandenburg Gate and overlooking the concrete barrier that divided the two German countries, he said: “Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.” –

That happened just two years later in the first year of the presidency of George H.W. Bush, another great friend of

Germany and a reliable partner in German-American relations.

Last month, Barack Obama was inaugurated as the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States.

Again, we have a man leading this country who is a great friend of Germany. Last summer he gave a rousing speech at the Siegessäule – his only public appearance in all Europe.

President Obama will return to Berlin in April, making Germany one of the first countries to visit as President.

Germans trust Barack Obama to lead the US into a peaceful future and they are eager to rekindle the decades old partnership between two great nations.

As German-Americans, we are proud to see the German-American friendship flourish again, and that is just another facet we should look at when celebrating Presidents Day.

Later this year, on September 19, we will enjoy the 52<sup>nd</sup> German-American Steuben Parade.

Berlin – the city where John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan have changed the world and where Barack Obama drew a crowd of hundreds of thousands of supporters – will be our official partner.

I am looking forward to greeting you all on Fifth Avenue when we celebrate our German-American culture, the achievements of German immigrants to the US and the ongoing friendship between our countries – as well as the legacy of leaders from Washington all the way to President Obama.

#### News and Announcements

Lars Halter and his team are already working on this year's parade, which will take place on September 19<sup>th</sup>. Although nothing is set in stone yet, we would like to turn your attention to some upcoming highlights already.



We are working and have approached Berlin to be this year's partner State because it is not only the German capital, but 20 years ago history was made there when the Wall came down, in part thanks to American presidents. We are sure that this part of our history will be a central aspect of this year's parade. We have also already started to plan Friendship Month. One event will feature the famous German comedian and entertainer Hape Kerkeling, who will present his book about a pilgrimage, which will come out in the English translation this year. In addition, there will be a Jam Session for Jazz musicians and a concert by „Harmonic Brass“ at Trinity Church. Details will be announced on the Website as they become available. If you have any other suggestions or want to offer your help in organizing an event, please feel free to contact the parade committee.

All the members of the committee will start their monthly meetings again in March, for which a special invitation will go out soon. Also, information about the crowning will soon be available on the website [www.germanparadenyc.org](http://www.germanparadenyc.org).

#### On a personal note

Unfortunately, this will be the last newsletter from me. I took a job in Austria and will move back to Europe in March. Therefore I will not be able to work for the parade any longer.

I would like to thank every one of you for your support, the open arms with which you welcomed me into the German-American community and your kind interest in this newsletter. A special Thank You goes to the whole parade committee, working with you was great and I enjoyed it tremendously. You made my time in New York City special and I will miss all the friends I made here. I promise to promote the parade

in Austria and hope to return soon as a visitor  
Good luck for the future and keep up the good work

Yours  
Tanja Ohlson