

# Our Town

## An In-depth Look at Historic Donaldsonville

A Publication of the Nicholls State University High School Journalism Workshop



*Chef Jeremy Langlois of Lafitte's Landing chops a potato  
by Erin Martin*

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# Our Town

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## In the beginning

It may be hard to believe, but this project actually started with a meeting. Good things seldom come out of meetings.

In late February members of the Nicholls State University Department of Mass Communication Professional Advisory Board met. Each year this group, made up of University faculty and area media professionals, gathers to discuss the state of local media. The group's objective is to try to find ways of improving that state.

This spring talk turned to high school students. Was there a way to show them the important role newspapers play in society and perhaps get them thinking about careers in journalism?

Someone put forth the notion that a workshop could be organized. By participating in a workshop, students could see first-hand that journalism is a challenging but rewarding field.

The discussion began to gather speed as it continued. Representatives of local newspaper organizations, including The Donaldsonville Chief, The (Houma) Courier and the Louisiana Press Association, quickly agreed to lend their assistance. This included a very generous financial contribution to offset the camp's cost.

The group decided that the best approach would be to assign these students the task of taking an in-depth look at a single community. Donaldsonville seemed to be the perfect choice.

It is a city with a rich heritage. It is a city whose development has been shaped by a wide array of cultures and races whose influence surrounds visitors strolling down Railroad Avenue.

It is a city, like many small cities, struggling to adapt to changing times. A city looking to its past to help carve its future. A city that with the addition of Chef John Folse's Lafitte's Landing at Bittersweet and the acquisition of Le Pelican, a reproduction of a 17th Century warship, is working toward becoming a significant tourist destination.

The Donaldsonville Chamber of Commerce went out of its way to embrace the workshop project.

The final ingredient was the students. They had to be the area's best. It wasn't necessary that they all be on their high school newspaper staffs. But they had to be curious and interested in writing or photography.

The search was successful.

Workshop organizers received many applications from very gifted students. It meant making difficult choices, but the cream of this group was selected.

The students have been everything organizers hoped for.

Motivated, hardworking, inquisitive. They spent two and a half days interviewing and re-interviewing as many of the city's residents as they could track down.

They discovered people with wonderful stories they wished to share.

To be sure, there were minor rough spots. Learning that has any real value is seldom easy. But organizers could have asked for no better group of students than they gathered for this pilot project. Workshop counselors gave participants some guidance, but the stories and pictures found on these pages are the result of the hard work of the students.

Nicholls and others responsible for putting this project together would like to offer thanks to everyone who made it possible.

They also hope that they enjoy the stories and pictures by the young people of our community. Their talent and drive offer a future of incredible promise.

# Lafitte's Landing anchors city's revitalization effort

by **Jennifer Tyler**

It is 2 p.m. and Jeremy Langlois, Executive Chef of Lafitte's Landing at Bittersweet Plantation, is already preparing for the 6 p.m. dinner. Langlois, 23, is considered a baby in the culinary business.

What is even more impressive is that he has earned this position at one of Louisiana's most famous restaurants. World-renowned chef John Folse opened Lafitte's Landing at Bittersweet Plantation in May 1999 after the restaurant's original site near the Sunshine Bridge was completely destroyed by fire.

The new restaurant and bed and breakfast serve as an anchor for the revitalization of businesses in Donaldsonville. Located at the corner of Claiborne and Railroad Avenues, it attracts visitors from around the world who have had the opportunity to taste Langlois' creations.

Langlois got his first taste of cooking when he was in high school by doing odd jobs around White Oak Plantation in Baton Rouge to earn money to buy a car.

His fascination with cooking grew quickly, and Langlois would sneak into the kitchen and beg the staff at White Oak to let him do any-

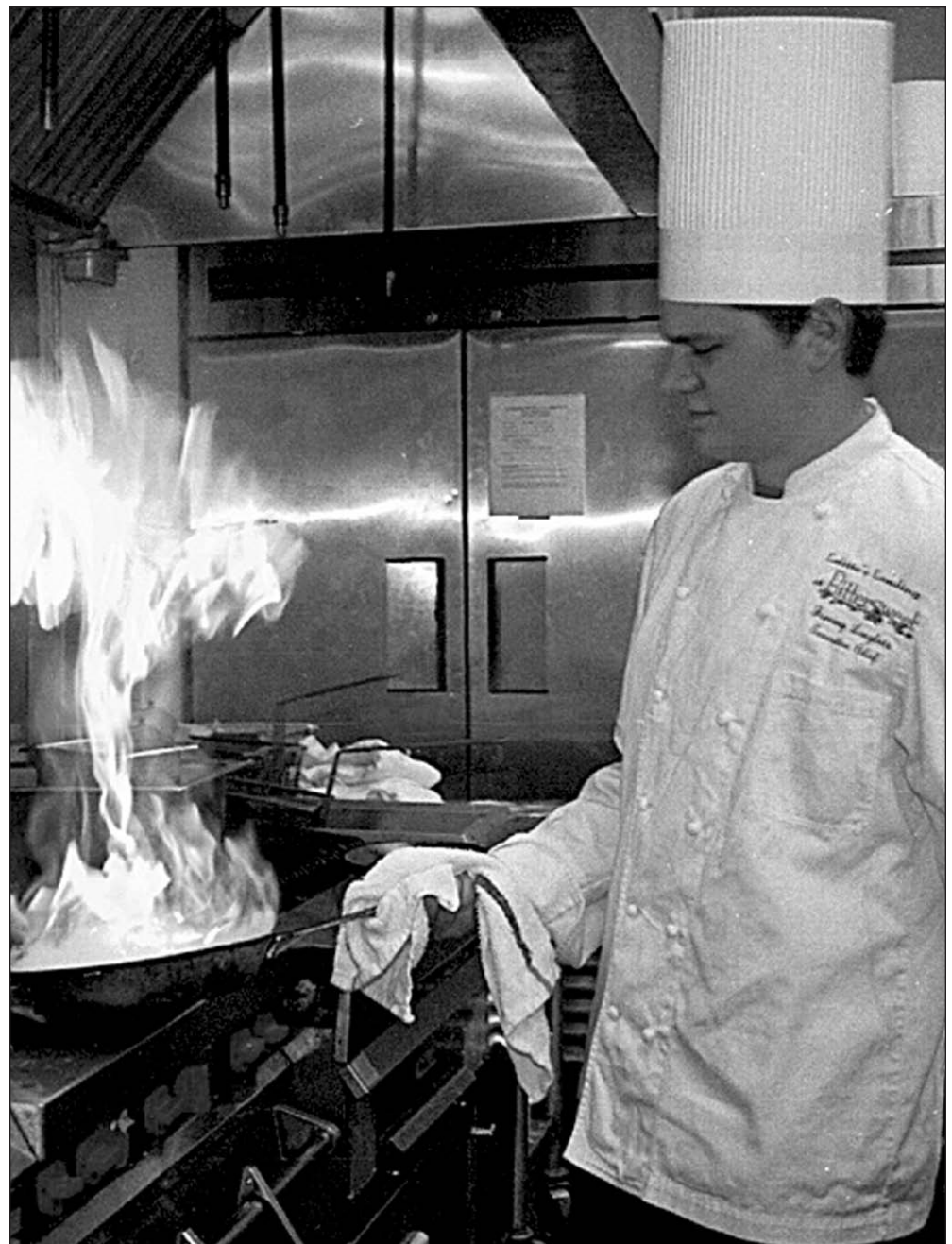
thing from chopping onions to sweeping floors. By his 16th birthday, he was working in the kitchen full time.

Modest about his success, Langlois has risen to his current position through sheer determination and hard work. He was named White Oak Plantation Employee of the Year before he was 20 years old and earned a scholarship to the Chef John Folse Culinary Institute at Nicholls State University where he will graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Culinary Arts in December. Langlois was named executive chef in August 2001.

"I consider my cooking to be a more contemporary Creole style," Langlois said of the menu at Lafitte's Landing. Langlois changes the menu about four times a year, depending on the season. He also enjoys using foods native to Louisiana such as peaches, strawberries, and soft-shelled crabs. At the moment his favorite food to cook is fish.

"(Working here) not only gives me the freedom to be creative, but I am in the area to use some of the best ingredients in the world," Langlois said.

*Jennifer Tyler is a senior at H.L. Bourgeois High School in Houma.*



by Erin Martin/Lutcher H.S.

*Executive Chef Jeremy Langlois prepares the Creole cuisine that Lafitte's Landing is known for. At the age of 23, Langlois is the youngest executive chef of all 700 whose restaurants belong to the prestigious Distinguished Restaurants of North America.*



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Nicholls State University High Journalism Workshop

# Local musicians shape birth of Jazz

by **Kenny Dion**

A crowd gathers. Hundreds of people are all there for the same purpose. The familiar sound of a local jazz violinist comes alive as he starts to play the most complicated pieces of music.

His name is Claiborne Williams, and, according to people around Donaldsonville, he played an instrumental role in the development of jazz. Unfortunately, the boundaries of the small rural community could not support its surging musicians.

The crowd falls to a hush as Williams and jazz leave Donaldsonville headed for the bright lights of New Orleans.

A century ago, Williams, just 18 at the time, and many other jazz musicians, may have opened the doors to the jazz era. Over a century later, jazz is undergoing a rebirth in Donaldsonville as residents try to preserve an important part of local and state history.

Williams performed as part of the St. Joseph Brass Band that toured the United States and Canada, and also performed for the King and Queen of England. Afterwards, Williams formed his own band called the Williams String Band that

played locally and eventually moved to New Orleans.

The Donaldsonville Associate Historical Society discussed the possible restoration of the house that Williams once owned. If put into effect the house would be restored in time for the Heritage Day at the end of September.

"We would like to restore the building because I think it's an important part of the jazz and also the revitalization of the city," said Richard Zeringue, Associate Historical Society member.

"In addition to the preservation of the Williams home, other residents, like Darryl T. Hambrick, are doing what they can to bring an awareness of jazz back to Donaldsonville.

Hambrick opened Hambonz seven months ago. The establishment features local artists, as well as artists from surrounding cities.

"Fifty or sixty years ago the only way Jazz musicians could get publicized was to go to New Orleans. Nowadays, artist that are starting out still struggle with the same thing," Hambonz Assistant Manager Zenus Dandridge said.

Dandridge said this struggle is one of the reasons for opening the bar. The bar features a wall with



by Erin Martin/Lutcher H.S.

Manager Zenus Dandridge shows the many records posted on the wall in the Hambonz Piano Room.

records signed by the artists that have started out playing jazz at Hambonz, along with other genres of music.

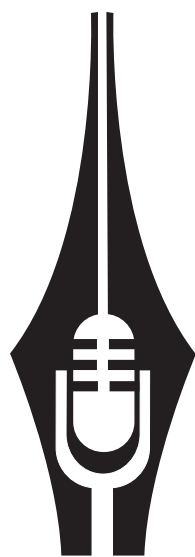
"I wouldn't say that the musicians put on a show, but it's fun to see the expression on their faces when they perform. I love this particular artist that plays here. When he plays it's like he's walking on coals; the expression on his face is like he's in pain. It also helps us out with the entertainment for us, but at

the same time we're promoting them," Dandridge said.

Donaldsonville's past music history now comes full circle with the daughter of Claiborne Williams, Bella Williams, now donating a violin to Hambonz, said Dandridge. With this contribution, the past now becomes the present.

Kenny Dion is a senior at Allen J. Ellender Memorial High School in Houma.

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# City has rich African-American heritage

by **Caegan Moore**

**D**onaldsonville is a city of beginnings. It's a town that cherishes and wants to preserve the roots of those beginnings. But while it's a town proud of the past, it's one that refuses to be trapped in it.

Mayor Raymond "Ray" Jacobs is at the helm at a time of rejuvenation. It's not surprising that an

African-American is providing his community with leadership during this critical period. Donaldsonville is a city rich with an abundance of African-American influence. It's this influence that shapes not only where that city has been, but where it is going.

Donaldsonville was the first African-American city to elect an African-American mayor – Pierre "Caliste" Landry. He was elected in

1868, just three years after the Civil War. Jacobs followed in Landry's footsteps by becoming the city's first full-time mayor.

Leading a city which is 70 percent African-American, Jacobs says he's made African-American citizens more trusting of government.

"I think I have given African-Americans more say-so in their government," Jacobs said.

African-Americans have played roles in more than the city's political development.

They also helped build the town and its industry. "We provided the cheap labor, historically," Jacobs says.

They also helped shape the culture. Some people argue that Donaldsonville, not New Orleans, is the birth-place of jazz.

One of the most visible symbols of the importance of the African-American community's contribution to the city is the True Friends Benevolent Society Hall, erected in 1886. This building served as the cultural center for Donaldsonville's African-American citizens for many years. It still stands, though abandoned, along Lessard Street.

There are increasing efforts to preserve this rich heritage.

Kathe Hambrick is one of those leading this effort. "I felt there was a lack of information being presented on African-American history," Hambrick, founder and director of the River Road African-American Museum, says. "This in an area predominantly African-American."

She traveled across the nation to conferences on historic preservation. She returned to Louisiana, specifically the river parishes, looking for buildings with predominantly African-American heritage in need of saving. One became the River

Road African-American Museum in March 1994.

Hambrick has become one of the leaders in efforts to preserve Donaldsonville's historic sites. She says she is now working on the River Road African-American Museum / Gallery Complex. The complex will be located on the corner of Williams and Lessard streets in Donaldsonville.

This project will include making renovations on the central agriculture school – Romeville School – and moving the schoolhouse, located in Convent across the Mississippi River, to Donaldsonville.

There are also plans for a Jazz Heritage Plaza. The project will showcase True Friends Benevolent Society Hall and the Africa Plantation Building, once owned by Dr. John H. Lowery, the first African-American doctor in Ascension Parish.

African-Americans continue to contribute to the city's cultural development. Alvin Batiste, featured repeatedly on television and the artist who designed the cover for actor Billy Bob Thornton's CD "Private Radio," has lived in Donaldsonville his whole life.

He began drawing at the age of 3 and began painting at 29. He taught himself, never having taken a lesson.

"I get my inspiration from the way my mother grew up. The things my mother went through and the stories she told inspired me," said Batiste, who has been painting for 10 years.

Batiste says his mother passed the African tradition of storytelling to him and from these stories come many of his paintings.

*Caegan Moore is a senior at Allen J. Ellender Memorial High School in Gray.*



by Laurel Levine/Vandebilt

*Donaldsonville Mayor Ray Jacobs speaks of the African-American influence on this river community. Jacobs, though not the city's first African-American mayor, is the first mayor to serve in a full-time capacity.*



## THE BARATARIA-TERREBONNE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

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# Time stands still at local restaurant

by **Erin Callais**

**O**n a sweltering summer afternoon, at the far end of Railroad Avenue, customers escape through the door into a darker, cooler world.

As each enters he or she is quickly greeted with a smile and "Hello."

In many ways, they've entered another time.

Since 1921 The First and Last Chance Café, founded by Charles Savoia and Bruno Ruggiero, has been a gathering place in Donaldsonville for locals and visitors alike. The Chance, as locals call it, got its name from porters, or waiters, who called, "First and last chance for food and drink," to passengers on trains that stopped across the street while traveling between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

During these stops, adults would drink at the bar, while their children played in the Blue Room, located in the back of the restaurant.

Today, children still scamper through the restaurant, but aren't restricted to the back quarters.

Aimee, 9, and Nancy, 7, daughters of current owners Billy and Julie Guillot, scurry back and forth, filling glasses with ice and playing a computer game.

"It's a family place," Billy says as he readies for a steady stream of lunch customers.

On this particular summer afternoon, porter Charlie Dixon is busy. The 40-year veteran writes nothing down as he moves from table to table taking orders.

"How do you remember that?" asks a customer.

"I have a really good memory," Dixon says.

Dixon began working at the Chance at a time when teens drank and smoked behind the building under the banana trees, and guys and



by Shantel Wempren/Thibodaux H.S.

**George Shaheen**, of Shaheen's Department Store, eats beef stew Tuesday at The First and Last Chance Café while talking to Nancy Guillot, whose parents own "The Chance." Shaheen is one of the many regulars who eats at "The Chance" every day. The restaurant has been in business since 1921.

girls would sneak under the trees to kiss.

Today the banana trees have been replaced by a batting cage, and kissing has been replaced with pitching and batting.

The Chance sponsors seven local baseball teams and in a building located behind the restaurant, nearly 60 players ages 7 and up, including his two daughters, practice every week.

There are plans to add two more covered batting cages next to the existing building, which started out as a place to cook the restaurant's famous sauces.

"It's a growing project," he said. Parents drop their children off or sit inside while he instructs them.

In addition to the locals who have frequented the restaurant for years, Billy says well-known customers at the Chance have included former governors Huey P. Long, Earl Long

and Jimmie Davis.

In recent years, the Chance has become a local hangout after sports games. People gather to celebrate victories, or to agonize over defeats. Julie remembers the restaurant's biggest crowd. It gathered after Ascension Catholic High School won the football state championship in 1992.

"You couldn't get in the door," Julie recalls, "We didn't leave until 4 the next morning."

The Chance has been a local watering hole for many years, but the restaurant has had to change with the times.

Now diners want chicken fajitas. Children can no longer be left alone to play in the Blue Room. It is now filled with a Christmas display of ceramic figures, the Chance's newest attraction.

Now, children as well as adults can eat in the the Chance's main

dining room.

But despite the changes, most things remain the same. The porters continue to remember orders flawlessly. People still gather to be a part of the restaurant's family and enjoy the excellent food.

Good food is one of the secrets to this establishment's success. George Shaheen, who's eaten at the Chance for 60 years, says, "Oh, I tell Billy that he has the world's finest ribs, the world's finest."

The welcoming family atmosphere is also an important part of success at the Chance. A rare combination of food and family ensures the restaurant's continued success.

"Our future depends on the locals and they've always been good to us," Billy says. "We're gonna continue to try to serve the community."

*Erin Callais is freshman at South Lafourche High School in Galliano.*

DONALDSONVILLE...

*Open for Business!*

# Thriving Jewish community fades over time

by Anna Matherne

**L**ocked away by the aged, iron gates of the plainly colored Bikur Sholim Cemetery is the history of the Jewish community in Donaldsonville.

Like the weathered tombstones in the cemetery, the local Jewish faith has faded through the years. What was once an important factor in the growth of the city is now gone.

Moving from the Alsace-Lorraine area to southern Louisiana, the Jewish population became prominent in the city of Donaldsonville by the 1860s. Some Jews were mayors. Many Jews were businessmen who were able to speak as many as four languages including Cajun French.

These businessmen owned companies that included David Israel's shoe store and the Lemann Department Store, started by Jacob Lemann.

Lemann, a peddler from the Alsace-Lorraine area, was one of the first Jews who came to Donaldsonville in 1836. He soon opened The Planter's Store, which sold general supplies.

In 1899, he was the international Harvester Tractor Dealer of southern Louisiana and started a line of equipment that is still in operation.

Jay Lemann, Vice President of Lemann's Farm Supply, is a sixth generation Lemann and one of the few remaining descendents of the first Jews in Donaldsonville.

Although Jay is not Jewish himself because of family marriages involving different religions, he is still extremely proud of his Jewish back-

ground. He's just as proud of his family giving service to the community for 166 years. Jay said the Jews were highly respected and accepted in the area.

Many of these businessmen became wealthy and were able to send their children to schools like Harvard. Unfortunately, most of the children who left never returned. Over time this led to the extinction of the Jewish religion in Donaldsonville.

"It saddens me that the Jewish population has dwindled to the point where we have no native born people of Jewish descent left in our community," says Stevie Graugnard, part owner of Cabahanosse Antiques and Gifts and a worker in the Historic Donaldsonville Museum.

Donaldsonville had the only synagogue along Bayou Lafourche. The Jews all along the bayou came to attend at the Bikur Cholim Synagogue and were buried in the Bikur Sholim Cemetery. By the 1940s the congregation became so low that the synagogue was forced to close. In its place stands an Ace Hardware store.

The cemetery, founded in 1856, remains. In it lie not only the graves of Donaldsonville residents, but also those from New Orleans, which suffered a yellow fever epidemic in 1859. New Orleans had no Jewish cemetery of its own. All of the deceased had to have some Jewish ancestry to be buried there.

The tombs of the Pforzheimer brothers and sisters, none of whom left children behind to carry on their faith, can be seen next to one another



by Laurel Levine/Vandebilt H.S.

*A single Jewish grave from the last century lies in solitude in the Bikur Sholim Cemetery. Jewish families from the bayou region and New Orleans are buried in the cemetery. Few Jewish burials still take place here today.*

er on the seventh row of the cemetery.

Ike Don, a Jewish vagabond who died in Donaldsonville, was buried in the cemetery with a Catholic priest presiding over the service. By then there were no longer rabbis in the community.

Funerals are still held in the cemetery, but they are few.

All that remains of the Jewish religion in towns located along the

bayou is this cemetery and the memories.

Donaldsonville is considered to be the gumbo of bayou country, and the Jewish faith that started in this city has contributed to this gumbo from the establishment of the people in the city.

*Anna Matherne is a senior at Central Lafourche High School in Mathews.*



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# Donaldsonville stands at crossroads

by **Barry Kappel**

Located at the crossroads of Bayou Lafourche and the Mississippi River, the town of Donaldsonville has seen its share of change. Ferries and paddleboats that once graced the banks of the town have long been replaced by cars and trucks that line Railroad Avenue.

Today Donaldsonville is at another crossroads – one that local business owners are hoping will propel the sleepy south Louisiana town into a major tourist magnet. Anchored by the opening of Lafitte's Landing at the Bittersweet, a restaurant owned by the world-renowned Chef John Folse, Donaldsonville is undergoing a revitalization that is bringing both businesses and tourists to its streets.

"We really feel that tourism is our future," Becky Katz, executive director of the Donaldsonville Chamber of Commerce, said.

With the success of Lafitte's Landing at the Bittersweet, Donaldsonville was able to get its foot in the door of opportunity. Since that time, new restaurants and businesses have begun to open on block after block of the avenue, owned by natives and non-natives alike.

Donaldsonville native Scott Delatte recently opened Scott's Bar and Grill in the former Ruggiero's Restaurant. "We are from Donaldsonville, and always wanted to open a business here," Dane Delatte, Scott's brother, said.

On the other hand, Dickie and Cynthia Breaux, natives of Breaux Bridge, also decided to bring their business to Railroad Avenue.

"Mr. Dickie and Cynthia Breaux came here because Mr. Dickie has high interest in historic places, and Donaldsonville has one of the highest populations of historic buildings in the country," Diane Wagner, manager at The Grapevine, said.

Seeing the opportunities tourism creates, Donaldsonville bought the original French warship Le Pelican in hopes that it will attract more tourists. Bayonne, France, is where the ship Le Pelican was originally constructed.

The boat sank under the navigation of Pierre d'Iberville LeMoyne at Fort Nelson.

Adding this historic boat to Donaldsonville will hopefully bring many new businesses.

Brent Landry, vice president of the Ascension Historical and Cultural Foundation, expects the ship to be open to the public in about 18 months and to contain a museum.

The leaders of Donaldsonville feel it is a good spot for these new businesses because it is located between two of the largest plantations in the south and tourists pass through by the thousands.

Donaldsonville not only wants to attract new businesses but new residents as well.

Donaldsonville has many different cultures that make it a unique community. It has access to major communi-



by Allison Richard/E.D. White H.S.

*The Grapevine Restaurant is one of the newest restaurants to join the culinary delights on Railroad Avenue. Owners Dickie and Cynthia Breaux, residents of Breaux Bridge, brought their business to Donaldsonville because of the historical architecture that the city is known for.*

ties that are only a few miles away.

"Donaldsonville is a quaint, quiet, charming community. Donaldsonville people have always been concerned with the welfare of their fellow man. Donaldsonville possesses a uniqueness whether it be its history, its people or its beauty that keeps drawing you back for more," Katz said.

With all the new businesses, residents and tourists coming through, problems may arise.

Preservation of the historic district is very important to the city.

"It is known that preservation of the historic district is important. Big companies know this and respect it.

That's why they tend to stay outside the city," said Katz.

Preservation of the historic district is not the only problem with all the new people coming through.

The city may lose its small town appeal and crime rates may go up.

"We know and realize that with growth problems may arise, and we realize that we just have to deal with them as they come. I do have a fear that with all the growth

Donaldsonville will lose some of its charm," Katz said.

*Barry Kappel is a senior at H.L. Bourgeois High School in Gray.*



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COME AND FEEL THE DIFFERENCE!

# Customers find history in barber shop

by **Dominique Frye**

Walking down Mississippi Street, people pass a small, nondescript building with a candy-striped pole that doesn't draw much attention.

Inside is a rust-orange floor sprinkled with small strips of hair. Inside is the smell of hair tonic and time. Inside is a world of World War II and Donaldsonville stories.

Paul Hymel sits in his barber chair waiting for his next customer. He's serviced many in his 51 years of cutting hair in this small river town.

"Take a seat," Hymel says as he welcomes his visitors, ready to talk about how things in this small town have changed and not changed, grown and stayed the same.

Hymel opened Paul's Barber Shop in 1949 after he returned from military service in World War II.

Hymel's shop is much like the town itself. It is full of rich history.

Donaldsonville was originally established in 1750 when the French and Spanish settled at the trading post called Lafourche des Chetimaches. After purchasing a small farm near Bayou Lafourche



*Paul Hymel, local barber, enjoys the afternoon waiting for customers outside his barber shop on Mississippi Street. Paul's Barber Shop has been servicing Donaldsonville residents since 1949.*

and the Mississippi River, Englishman William Donaldson hired Bartholomew Lafon in 1807 to establish a master plan for a developing town to be called Ville de Donaldson.

In 1812 "The New Orleans" became the first steamboat to arrive in Donaldsonville. By the 1820s Donaldsonville became a river port with sugar, molasses and cotton being the main products.

At that time everyone considered himself French. It wasn't until the

1870s that the local newspaper began printing entirely in English.

It wasn't until the 1920s and 1930s that residents began even to commonly think of themselves as "Americans."

When Hymel started his business four years after returning from World War II, haircuts were 25 cents.

Now everyone thinks of himself or herself as an American and haircuts are \$8.

Much else has changed in the city

around him and his shop over those 51 years.

The ferry boats that he remembers crossing the Mississippi River are long gone.

He never realized that the nearby candy and cigar factories of his youth would one day be gone. They too have disappeared.

Hymel wants the change to continue, to come full circle. He hopes that with revitalization, lost businesses will return to the empty buildings around his shop.

Whatever tomorrow brings, Hymel plans to continue doing what he loves. Every day of the week – except Wednesday when he goes to the casino – the 76-year-old barber goes to cut hair. In the shop are his memories.

Along the walls hang his hat from his military service. There are medals surrounding a picture of him as a 17-year-old.

He plans to remain to see the changes that are on the horizon.

"I would never leave the city of Donaldsonville," he said.

*Dominique Frye is a junior at Houma Christian High School in Houma.*



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# Chief's mission remains unchanged

by **Marie Ory**

**P**eter Waguespack, editor, photographer and writer for The Donaldsonville Chief for the past three and a half years, bustles in and out of his cluttered office to prepare computer files for the printer.

It's 2 p.m. on Tuesday and the staff of four is on deadline. There is a discussion between the publisher and designer since this is only the third week of processing the paper completely by computer files. And tomorrow, the finished product will be on sale to the community.

Although the technology has changed through the years, the mission stays the same: To give the people of Donaldsonville a quality paper that they can rely on week in and week out.

"I think we have a good product coming out each week. We do a lot of feature type stories that will pick the reader's attention," Waguespack said.

"We are always looking for ways to get better and put out a good product. If we continue to do the job that we are doing a lot of people will notice the job that we do with a limited amount of people."

Linden E. Bentley began producing The Chief in 1871, making it the oldest publication in Ascension Parish and the third oldest in Louisiana. Bentley was an organizer for the Louisiana Press Association, and he remained with The Chief for 39 years.

Since that time, The Chief has changed hands many times, giving new publishers and editors the chance to produce the news. Three years ago, the newspaper went from being locally owned to being owned

*'The diversified culture made up of African Americans, Spanish, Italians and Native Americans who came over to the city have made it unique.'*

*-- Peter Waguespack*

by a corporate business called Liberty Group, which is based out of Northbrook, Ill.

Named for the Chetimaches and Houmas tribes that inhabited the area many years ago, The Chief uses stories having a local flair. This is a change from the earlier style of the paper when articles were based on nationwide news written in a one-column format with stories placed one after the other.

"Ninety percent [of the paper] every week is strictly about people from here, meetings, photos of different kids around the area and other types of stories that come from within the parish," Waguespack said.

Donaldsonville is in the process of a revitalization project that is bringing change upon the community. The Chief, however, plans on remaining the same.

"There is a possibility in the future [that the paper will change], but for now we have a good style that fits the renovations and revitalization to go along with the modern times," Waguespack said.

Because The Chief is a small town newspaper, Waguespack said it is sometimes hard to keep a staff and to keep the news alive in the community.

"There is not a whole lot going on. This parish as a whole is not a criminal related area, and the gist of my stories comes from meetings, different social gatherings, events and festivals," he said.

With the revitalization project

underway, some up-and-coming businesses may use the newspaper's success as inspiration.

Connie Fredric, graphic designer for The Chief, said she has seen a lot of businesses close down due to the cutbacks of people working in the city.

"As for the future, I find that it is starting to pick up because there are plans for Donaldsonville that the city council and the chamber are working on," she said.

Through the revitalization, many things will change and new businesses will open, but the citizens of the city have molded to the way that news is presented in the newspaper, which provides a certain uniqueness to the publication that will not change.

"The diversified culture made up of African-Americans, Spanish, Italians and Native Americans who came over to the city have made it unique," Waguespack said.

The only major change that the publication has gone through is from the old printing presses to computer pagination.

"Back then, they would type and write everything on a typewriter with no computers. They would use a physical layout, and now we use 100 percent pagination," Waguespack said.

"Being with the paper for the last 23 years, we have gone through good times and hard times. Back then we had a print shop where we did job printing and we had office

supplies, so the paper was really booming and making a lot of money," Frederic said.

"The most exciting thing is seeing how technology has come along from literally piecing things together to fully paginating everything by computer."

The Chief staff is making changes to keep up with changing technology and the ever-changing times. These changes allow consideration for the revitalization project and the bearing it will have on the newspaper and the editorial stance of the staff.

"By us writing positive stories about the revitalization effort, that will make people want to come here, visit here and settle here,"

Waguespack said

Mike Pace, publisher of The Chief, said the newspaper supports the revitalization project.

"We are 100 percent behind the revitalization because the revitalization is the key to the future of Donaldsonville and the future of the businesses here. We have to be willing to open up our arms and accept that there are going to be some changes and that there are going to be new people coming into town. We definitely want to partner with those people and be part of the revitalization," he said.

The clock ticks by and soon it is 4:30 p.m. The staff has settled down and a few sighs can be heard. The busy bustling stops and the paper is put to bed. Tomorrow there will be new stories to be told. New pictures to be taken. New changes in the small city by the river.

*Marie Ory is a Nicholls State University Mass Communication junior from LaPlace.*

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# Slice of life

*Workshop photographers take a close-up look at the faces and places that make Donaldsonville such a special city.*



photo by Shantel Wempren/Thibodaux H.S.

## Close work

*Cindy Imbraguglio of Custom Framing on Railroad Avenue frames a postcard reprint of an Alvin Batiste painting.*

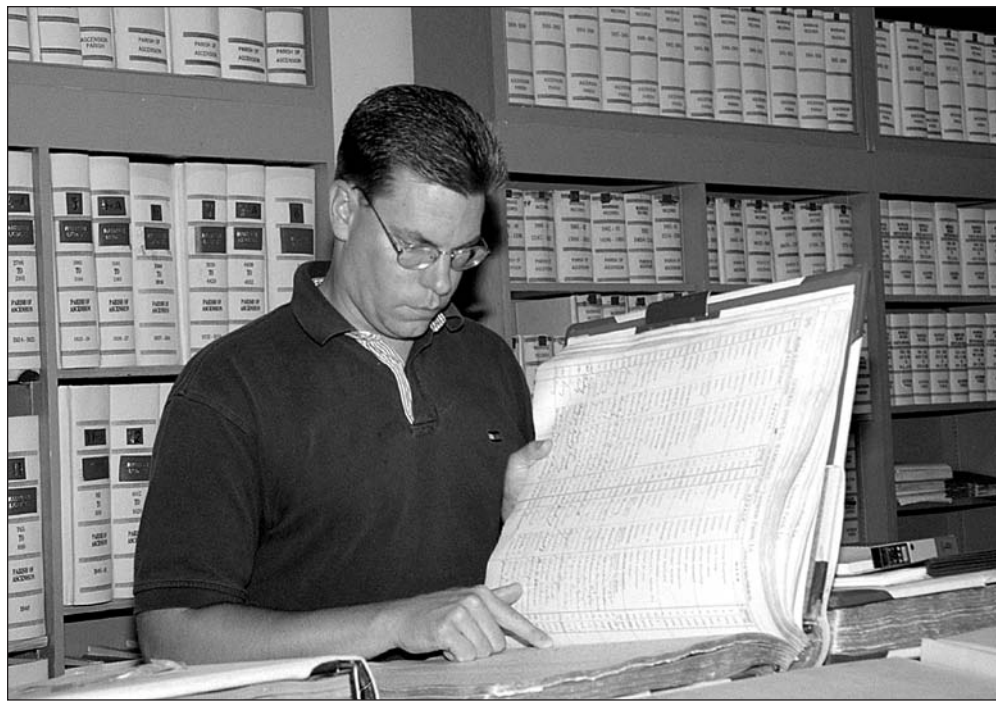


photo by Shantel M. Wempren/Thibodaux H.S.

## Looking back

*Mark Schlies of Atlanta, Ga., looks through a marriage-record book at the courthouse Tuesday. Schlies is a professional genealogist.*



photo by Erin Martin/Lutcher H.S.

## Fresh from the oven

*Robert "Bob" Dimm, 65, proudly shows off his freshly made bread Tuesday at Dimm's Bakery on Railroad Avenue.*



photo by Shantel M. Wempren/Thibodaux H.S.

## Ride the train

*The noon Union Pacific freight train rumbles through Donaldsonville Wednesday. The railroad has long been*

*a vital lifeline for Donaldsonville. At one time rail passengers would stop in the city for refreshments.*

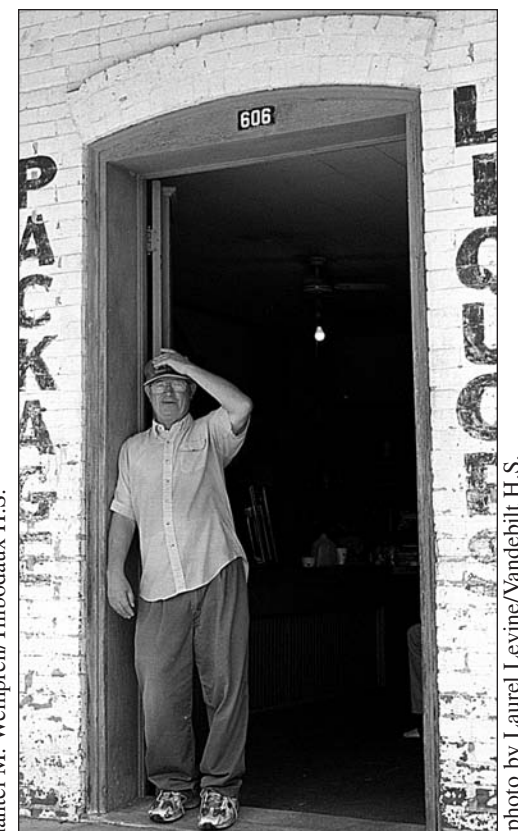


photo by Laurel Levine/Vandebilt H.S.

## Family business

*John Viso, 60, a long-time resident of Donaldsonville, inherited Package Liquors from his family and continues running it. The shop sells beverages and snacks.*

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The Nicholls State University Department of Mass Communication would like to thank the those citizens and businesses that participated in our high school journalism project.

**SPECIAL THANKS TO:**

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The New York Times Regional  
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The Louisiana Press Association

*Congratulations to the students on a job well done.*