



Scholz Garten History



August Scholz (1825-1891), a German immigrant and confederate veteran, built his public bar and cafe over an old boarding house, the year following the end of the Civil War (1866). Mr. Scholz had purchased the building and surrounding property in 1862 from Sam Norville for \$2400. August Scholz made his last payment on the property in 1871. Scholz Garten (Scholz's Halle) became a restaurant, bar and popular meeting place for the German population in and around Austin. It also became a center for Austin's social and cultural activities (German operas and Orchestra music) and of course a favorite German food restaurant and bar. The Biergarten and other rooms were added later as the need arose. Mr. Scholz operated his unique tavern and cafe until his death in 1891. His step-son operated the little bar and restaurant for two more years, then sold Scholz Garten to the Lemp Brewery Company (Falstaff Beer) in 1893, the same year that The University of Texas football team had its first undefeated season. Since The University was only two blocks away, the team celebrated its victories at Scholz Garten. Celebrating is just one of the traditions that is still alive here at Scholz Garten.

In December of 1908 a German singing club, The Austin Saengerrunde (singer in the round) purchased the restaurant and bar from The Lemp Brewery and built a bowling alley near the Biergarten boundaries. The six lane bowling alley is still in operation. The Saengerrunde still owns Scholz Garten, but leases the bar and restaurant operation to restaurant entrepreneurs like myself. During prohibition Scholz Garten came up with a non-alcoholic brew in 1921 and called it Bone Dry Beer. There is a large framed photo of the bar in the front room (San Jacinto Blvd. entrance) taken during prohibition without any beer taps or beer advertisements. Prohibition, the 18th amendment or Volstead Act, lasted from 1920 until 1933 when it was repealed by the 21st amendment. Food sales, for obvious reasons, became more important during prohibition and the menu items included many traditional German and Texas favorites. Food sales increased to more than 50% after prohibition and have continued to be a staple of Scholz's business. Good Food became a Scholz Garten tradition.

Scholz Garten is one of the few establishments that fortunately doesn't change too much, but when it has the public seems to make quite a big deal about it. In 1962, Bob Bales, Scholz's operator, decided to do some remodeling and even added, heaven forbid...air conditioning! Bob reported he was almost run out of town! The Bales Family, including state legislator, Larry Bales, (Bob Bales' nephew) operated Scholz Garten until Larry's passing in 1994. Larry's children, David and Stacy Bales operated Scholz's until 1996. Stacy Bales passed away in 2010.

The 1966 Texas legislature (the 59th) honored Scholz Garten in House Resolution #68 "as a gathering place for Texans of discernment, taste, culture, erudition, epitomizing the finest tradition of magnificent German heritage in our State." Scholz Garten was recognized as a friendly forum for discussion of the problems of government and a relaxing respite from the cares of state. Scholz Garten was recorded as a Texas Historical Landmark in 1967. My cousins, Eddie and Susie Ball, as well as many others have attended university approved political science classes at Scholz Garten. Citizens, college students, professors, and politicians have debated many issues since Scholz Garten has opened. The more liberal-minded traditionally meet in the Biergarten, and those of the conservative persuasion seem to gather inside. Debates, usually friendly, have even garnered the media's attention. Political discussions (debates) have been broadcast on local radio news programs with just a few bleeps now and then. Political discussions are a Scholz Garten tradition. Scholz Garten is the last of the great Biergartens in Texas. It was a place that the entire family could visit before horseless carriages and moving pictures took their toll on everyone's time. Kids could romp noisily around the bandstand, while their parents could enjoy a cold beer and some good food. Good food (hot) and cold beer are still traditions at Scholz Garten.

In the summer of 1995, after complaining about Scholz's hot beer and cold food, I was dared by my wife, Elizabeth, to restore Scholz Garten to some of it's former glory. Liz said "Stop complaining and fix it." After deciding I should complain in silence I asked some people to help to make Scholz Garten's restoration possible. They were: Liz, Lauren, two people named Brian, Joe, Fred, Jesse, Beverley, Kip, Dee Dee, and Vincent. They worked long hours to re-open Scholz Garten. Restoration would have been much more difficult without their help. Thanks to my family and friends for their prodding and patience. Enjoy our hot food, cold beer, and have some **good** conversation while you visit Scholz Garten. Those are Scholz Garten traditions. Make those your Traditions. You probably deserve it.

From the biergarten,

Tom Davis

(Austin, Texas - January, 2014)

© Copyright Scholz Garten 2014