



A Hidden Impact: The Czechs & Slovaks of Louisiana From the 1720s to Today

James Hlavac

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The first Czechs arrived in Louisiana as early as 1720, living on the so-called German Coast. The first Slovaks came just a few years later. Never before has this immigration been chronicled. Czechs and Slovaks have left a remarkable legacy to the state. The icon of New Orleans, St. Louis Cathedral, was finished by a man with Moravian roots-Benjamin Latrobe. The St. Charles Street Car line was started by the Bohemian Samuel Kohn, who also developed the Carrollton district of the city. The Pokorny family owned dozens of buildings in downtown New Orleans. Joseph Frankenbush helped create the New Orleans Cotton Exchange. Czechs built many buildings over the succeeding years that residents and visitors to Louisiana encounter every day, including many civic buildings in Baton Rouge and the surrounding parishes. Slovaks were thickly settled in Cameron Parish. Czechs created the towns of Libuse and Kolin out of thin air in Rapides Parish. Despite the legacy in stone the history of Czechs and Slovaks in Louisiana has been overlooked by other historians. They were small in number, but big in their "hidden impact."

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