



# Gretna Chronicles



Gretna, Louisiana

Happy New Year 2022

Volume 32, Issue 1

An Official Publication of the Gretna Historical Society

January, 2022

## The President Presiding...

By Sylvia Schwarz, GHS President



Happy New Year 2022! Hope everyone had a blessed Christmas. **NOTE: Due to the recent surge in Omicron variant cases of Covid-19, the Board has agreed that we will NOT hold the January 13 Membership Meeting!**

The GHS December meeting/Christmas party was a rousing success. "Christmas Around the World" was a Musical Extraordinaire, a spectacular production showcasing the tremendous talent in our membership. Fabulous job, Ray Markase!

Congratulations to our newly elected Board who will lead us throughout this year. The installation of officers will be held at the next general meeting.

President.....Sylvia T. Schwarz  
Vice President.....James Rolf  
Recording Secretary.....Cheryl Amacker  
Corresponding Secretary.....Lisa LaFrance  
Treasurer.....Sarah Daigle  
Historian and Archivist.....Stephanie Dietrich

Parliamentarian.....Sue McLetchie  
Sergeant at Arms.....Holly Williams  
Board Member at Large.....Ray Markase  
Board Member at Large.....Monica Naquin  
Board Member at Large...M. Helen Williams  
Board Member at Large.....Chris Ziifle

Please be sure to pay your 2022 dues. \$20 a year is a real bargain!

## It Was a Spectacular Christmas Musical Presentation!



**Left:** Peggy Darce gave a Mr. Bingle welcome to "Christmas Around the World." **Top right (L to R):** Christmas in Mexico with Luanne Neeb, Monica Naquin, Angie Jacuillard, Pam Volek and Cheryl Amacker. **Lower right:** Christmas in Germany with Holly Williams, Val Coles, Sylvia Schwarz and Irvin Schwarz.



### WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Robin Graham  
Mary & Ronny Guidry  
Glen & JoAnn Jambon  
Christina Lake  
Tammy Montelius

Cindy O'Brien  
Donna Raffo  
Violet Saladino  
Karen Olsen Strawn  
Jane Thielier

Welcome back to Nikki Ramagos who recently rejoined

## More Photos from the Christmas Spectacular!

**Right:** Paul Coles croons “It’s a Wonderful World” with backups Nancy Hebert and Therese Juneau.



**Above:** Grandma (Michael Daigle) got run over by a reindeer (Blaine Daigle). **Middle:** Belinda Constant, Debbie Spera and Stephanie Dieterich as The Andrew Sisters. **Right:** Elf Ronnie Arcement and Director Ray Markase.



**Above:** Leprechaun B.J. LeBlanc in Ireland for Christmas with Ronnie Arcement, Scott Amacker, Donald Darce, Val Coles, Sarah Daigle, Holly Williams, Sylvia & Irvin Schwarz and Hannah Wilson. **Right:** Hawaiian Beauties, Greg Volek, Dwight Maness and Dave Neeb.



**Right:** Leading the finale on guitar is Billy Jacquillard with Wanda Markase out front for “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree.” A photo of BJ LeBlanc as Santa Claus joined the cast; he will always be with us!



**Times Past** — By Stephanie Dieterich

**The 4 Corners of Lafayette & 9th**

Of the many neighborhood corner groceries in Gretna, the one my mom would send me to was called Tony's, owned by Anthony Labruzzo and his wife, Katherine. Mr. Labruzzo's name may sound familiar since the David Crocket Steam Fire Station #1 in the 1100 block of Lafayette Street was dedicated in his honor for his longtime service as fire chief.

The store was originally De Luca's, owned by Frank De Luca, Mr. Labruzzo's uncle. My mother, who grew up two blocks away, told me De Luca's was the gathering place for the neighborhood ladies when she was young. She said they would sit on the wooden steps and shoot the breeze. This was, of course, before air conditioning or television.

My earliest recollection of the grocery was of a wooden raised building. I still remember the large Jack's cookie jar that sat on the counter and the open package of cigarettes behind the counter awaiting customers who would buy just one or two individual cigarettes. While the Labruzzo's were building their new brick home and grocery, the old store was moved across Lafayette Street to the empty corner lot so it could remain open for business. Ironically, the location of Tony's Grocery is now Classic Frame and Mat, the business of yet another Tony. Three new homes are being built on the empty corner lot that once temporarily housed the grocery. Houses once stood on that lot but were gone by the 1950s.

Gassenberger's was across the street. It was built in the 1930s by William Gassenberger as a family home and business. Over the years, it has been many things but primarily served as a bar, restaurant and liquor store. The corner doors opened into the liquor store. As the door opened, a bell rang alerting the barroom next door. Someone would step out and ask what you wanted. I was usually the gofer if my parents were entertaining and the alcohol was running low. It didn't matter if you were eight or nine years old, as long as they knew your parents, you could buy liquor. "Who's your mama" was frequently asked. The Gassenberger's daughter, Carmen, eventually bought and ran the family business for many years. GHS member Vita Rose Leftwich is the daughter of Carmen Gassenberger Matherne.

Patrons included local politicians such as Gretna Alderman Hubert "Bunny" Uzee. Bunny drove a school bus and when he retired it was Carmen who purchased his bus and took over his route. Banana Blossom Restaurant now occupies the building. Whenever I dine there, entering those same corner doors gives me a sense of deja vu.

Diagonally across the street, the old double house on Lafayette at 9th has belonged to the William Spies family for over a hundred years. The rooms across the front of the house were once Spies's Saloon. One of Gretna's early hunting clubs, the Wooloomooloo Gun and Rod Club met in an old two story building behind the house. In 1921 that club won the Championship Honors for the largest amount of deer kills in the history of Jefferson Parish. The building is long gone, replaced in the 1960s by the dance school of Jerry Lou Fortmeyer who still resides in the family home. GHS has two board members who took dance lessons from Ms. Jerry Lou -- Holly Lawson Williams and myself!



Now Banana Blossom Restaurant, this building was originally Gassenberger's bar, restaurant and liquor store.

**Three Gretna Clubs Make High Records for Season.**

Championship honors for the 1921 deer hunting season are claimed by the Wooloomooloo Gun and Rod Club members, who returned late Sunday with two fine bucks, bringing their total number of kills to twenty-six for the season, the largest in the history of deer hunting in Jefferson Parish. There were a total of 134 deer killed during the season by the several Gretna parties that hunted regularly, according to figures obtained Monday. In addition to Wooloomooloo's twenty-six, the Dauenhauer-Sprauer crowd reported having killed twenty-four, as did the Kerner crowd, while the independents claim a total of twenty-three, it is said, and the Outlaws twenty-two. The Ehret crowd claims fifteen. All records have been smashed by these figures, it is claimed. The Wooloomooloo give due credit to their peeks, Joe Hoffman, Jim Calzada, Warren Hotard and Pat Burke, all of whom are said to know the Jefferson and Plaquemines woods intimately.

*Gretna Chronicles succeeds the GHS Newsletter and the Gretna Historical Society Newsletter as the official source of news for the general membership of the Gretna Historical Society.*

## ***Gretna Historical Society***

201-209 Lafayette Street

P.O. Box 115

Gretna, LA 70054-0115



### ***Gretna Historical Society Museum Complex***

1840s Strehle Family Cottage, 1859 David Crockett Volunteer Fire Co. No. 1 Fire Station (now Louisiana Fire Museum), 1840s White Family Cottage

## **Gretna Chronicles Staff**

M. Helen Williams, Editor

To submit articles, call Helen at 504.450.8481

(or e-mail [mhw500@cox.net](mailto:mhw500@cox.net))

### **ABOUT THE GHS AND HOW TO JOIN**

The Gretna Historical Society was founded in Gretna, Louisiana, in 1969, by Lloyd E. Gomez (insurance man, volunteer firefighter, and community activist), who descended from Gretna pioneers, German immigrants Claudius and Catherine Nuss Strehle. The Society's articles of incorporation were drafted by Gretna attorney Everette F. Gauthreaux and signed in his law office on October 26, 1969. Today, the GHS operates the Gretna Historical Society Museum Complex at the corner of Lafayette Street at Second. It consists of three 19th century Creole cottages, a blacksmith shop, and the Louisiana Fire Museum. The GHS also owns and maintains the caboose and train depot on Huey P. Long Avenue at Fourth Street.

There are no requirements for membership in the GHS, other than the timely payment of annual membership dues of \$20 per person. Monthly meetings are held at the St. Joseph's Auditorium at 7th and Newton Streets on the second Thursday of every month at 7:00 p.m. Guests and prospective members are always welcome to attend the meetings.

The society's newsletter, *Gretna Chronicles*, is published monthly and mailed or emailed to all members.

## **Gretna Chronicles**

is published for the members and friends of the

### **Gretna Historical Society**

P.O. Box 115, Gretna, LA 70054-0115

Phone: 504.362.3854

Email: [directoroffacilities@gretnahistoricalsociety.org](mailto:directoroffacilities@gretnahistoricalsociety.org)

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- M. Helen Williams.....Board Member at Large
- Chris Ziifle.....Board Member at Large
- Judy LeBlanc.....Director of Facilities