



Gretna Chronicles

Gretna, Louisiana

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June, 2021

The President Presiding...

By Sylvia Schwarz, GHS President



And a good time was had by all! If you missed the crawfish boil, you missed a good time, excellent crawfish and dynamic fellowship. It was so good to see everyone again. I felt like we needed nametags to identify everyone since it had been such a long time. Just kidding! A big thanks goes out to all who donated desserts.



- June 15 is the date for the Gretna Prayer Dinner. The GHS has purchased several premium tables. Tickets are \$15. If you wish to attend, call Judy at the GHS office to purchase one or more before the June 15 deadline.
- July 8 will be our annual BBQ at the GHS Complex. Chef Garland and Chef Blaine will do the barbequing. Papa Daigle will make his world-famous potato salad. All the fixings will also be included. As usual we ask for dessert donations.
- August 13 will be the Wine Tasting Extravaganza at the Gretna Cultural Center for the Arts. Thanks to Mal and Sue McLetchie who will select wine for our enjoyment.
- On September 9, Ira Hopkins from the German-American Cultural Center will continue his Gretna history presentation at the regular monthly meeting. Since everyone enjoyed his last presentation, we thought you would enjoy Ira 2.0.
- On November 6, we will host the annual Hook & Ladder Cemetery Tour.
- Repairs are needed on the roof of the Complex's firehouse museum because of storm damage.
- Supplemental air conditioning in the patio room has been added.
- We have 10 event rentals scheduled. Keep those cards and letters coming!

UPCOMING
Events

Mark your calendar because starting in July we will have regular scheduled events or programs until the end of the year. It has been an interesting time. Rejoice!

Times Past — By Stephanie Dieterich

The Kerner House

The residence at 1012 Monroe Street in McDonoghville, known as the Kerner House, was recently identified by the Louisiana Trust for Historic Preservation as one of Louisiana's Most Endangered Places. It's a disheartening turn of events for the only residence in Gretna to be individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. There are only 19 individual structures in all of Jefferson Parish with this distinction and only seven of those were constructed as homes.

In addition to this designation, the home is listed as a contributing element to the local McDonoghville Historic District that is currently progressing to be listed as Gretna's second National Register Historic District.

While there is much dispute over the true age of the home, it is without question that the stately Center Hall dwelling was certainly an impressive structure in rural McDonoghville. Whether or not it was built by a Kerner is also a mystery. Some believe the home was constructed prior to 1831 for Jean Paul Roglin and later renovated by a Kerner in a more fashionable and grand style. Others believe it was constructed between 1831 and 1854. What is known is that the entire block or island of land was purchased in 1818



A fireplace in the Kerner House.

directly from John McDonogh by P. Calliou. In 1827 P. Calliou sold the same square to Jean Paul Roglin, who constructed a home and lived on the property. In 1831 the Estate of Jean Paul Roglin sold the property to Charles Kerner.



The Kerner House at 1012 Monroe Street, in 1999.

Charles Kerner was born in 1783 and came to New Orleans aboard the bark *Jupiter* from Neidersachen, Germany, in 1820. He was one of the Redemptioners whose services were sold to the highest bidder until the fees of the passage were paid back.

A hard-working butcher, Charles did very well and by 1825 was able to buy land in the City of Lafayette which was later annexed by New Orleans. It was on this same property that Charles was wrongly accused of keeping stolen sheep. He won the case in the Louisiana Supreme Court thanks to his lawyer friend, Christian Roselius, whom he had shared passage with aboard the *Jupiter*.

Roselius later served as dean of the University of Louisiana that became Tulane University. He was one of John McDonogh's attorneys and an executor of the McDonogh Estate. Roselius' former home still stands at 515 Broadway in New Orleans, circa early 1840s, and is a raised Center Hall home similar to the Kerner House.

(Continued on Page 3)

The Kerner House, continued

When Charles Kerner died in 1854 after living on the property for 24 years, the inventory of his will included a home and its contents, plus a substantial amount of land holdings in McDonoghville and Mechanikham. His estate was left to his wife Johana Schukker and his nine living children. Charles, the oldest son, left McDonoghville to resettle in Lafitte where his descendent Tim Kerner Sr. served as longtime mayor until his election as a State Representative. The other living Kerner children were Louis, Louisa, Juliana, William, Caroline, Eustus, Henry and John Frederick. In 1850 the census of Freetown, as that area was called, includes all of the above names.

Son William, also a butcher, next acquired the family property and raised his family there. William's first wife was Charlotte Hausknect and their two children were Charlotte and Clementine. Wife Charlotte was struck by lightning on the property and killed instantly in 1870. In 1873, William married Emily Berger who had a daughter named Caroline Bossy. William and Emily had children together including Agnes, Emily (Emma), Julie, William, Louis and Margaret. Like his



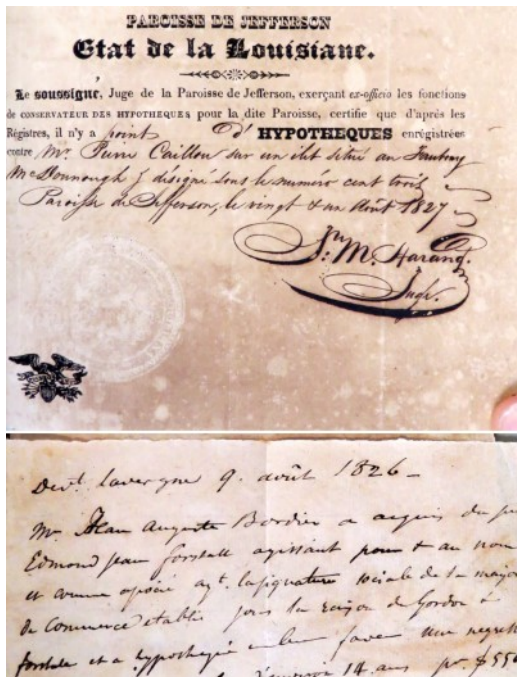
The Historic Kerner House, today.

father, William also brought a lawsuit to the Louisiana Supreme Court in the Slaughterhouse Cases when New Orleans was trying to monopolize the businesses from independent butchers.

In 1895, William died leaving a substantial amount of landholdings. Certain people told his wife, Emily, not to worry because they would take care of her holdings. Unfortunately when she died a few years later, the property appears to have gone to tax sale. Daughter Emily, known as Emma, was able to purchase back the square that included the Kerner House. She continued to live there with her husband George Trauth and son Elbert, as well as her younger siblings. In 1900 Emma sold the home to the Brupbacher family who owned the home for another 100 years. Emma moved to Gretna and became a restaurateur opening Whiteside's Restaurant. Still in the family today, her Gretna home became the Red Maple Restaurant.

When the Kerner House property was listed on the National Register in 1999, the date of construction was placed at 1870, which is certainly incorrect. Additional research has narrowed down the construction period from 1827 to 1854. To more precisely date the home, the construction methods would need to be analyzed, access to which has not been afforded to date.

It is hopeful that the awareness brought about by the designation as an Endangered Place will bring a resolve to ensure the Kerner House can be restored and saved to last another 150 or more years.



Official document from the 1827 sale of the Kerner property.

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

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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

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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
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