



# Gretna Chronicles

Gretna, Louisiana

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An Official Publication of the Gretna Historical Society

May, 2021

## The President Presiding...

By Sylvia Schwarz, GHS President

As more and more people are getting vaccinated against Covid-19, the state and local governments are lifting more and more restrictions. This is a good thing because more and more of us feel comfortable in getting out and returning to our normal lives. Hope you are in that number. We at the GHS are in that number!

- The Crawfish Boil will be held at the GHS Complex on Thursday, May 13. We will be practicing social distancing as per state and local guidelines.



### GHS Crawfish Boil

May 13 at 6:00 p.m. \* Dine-in or  
Take-out

GHS Museum Complex Backyard  
Crawfish, Potatoes, Corn, Sausage

Ticket Required (Deadline 5/10) \* \$15 per person

Tickets must be picked up at the GHS Complex  
during business hours.

Call if needed: 504.362.3854

We will have

take-out available for pick up for those of you who wish. If you choose to dine with us in the complex backyard, get your ticket early. Tickets will be available on April 29. Deadline for tickets sales is Monday, May 10. *Donation of desserts will be greatly appreciated.*

- Our future plans include: The July Barbecue; The August Wine Tasting; hopefully, a September General Membership Meeting at the St. Joseph Complex; and The Cemetery

Tour at the end of October or early November.

- Additional air conditioning has been installed in the enclosed patio area of the White House so guests will be kept cool during the summer months.
- Bookings for the complex continue to increase. Help spread the word that our complex is a great place for future events at a very reasonable price.
- To welcome the Gretna Farmers Market, the new occupants of our Gretna Depot, an official ribbon cutting is being planned.
- We are looking forward to seeing all of you in the near future. Stay healthy and safe.



The late Ziifle sisters, Myra, left, and Ruth, right, certainly enjoyed the crawfish boil in 2016.

## *The White House: Perfect Venue For Spring Events*



With its beautiful renovations, the White House is the perfect choice to be rented for social events such as receptions, repasts, showers and parties.

Amenities include an added patio, updated kitchen and large back yard for socializing. call 504.362.3854 to check on availability and rates.



### **DUES REMINDER**

As announced last year, with no monthly meetings or events due to the pandemic, GHS elected to roll forward members' paid dues for 2020 to also cover 2021. Some members still owe for 2019, as well as for 2020. If you owe, please send your dues, \$20 per member per year, to P.O. Box 115, Gretna, LA 70054. If you are unsure if you owe, call Judy LeBlanc at 504.362.3854.



## ***Times Past*** — By Stephanie Dieterich

### **McDonogh Schools in Gretna**

John McDonogh has recently been condemned. What many people don't know is that he lived simply and miserly, saving his wealth in order to provide impoverished children of all races the opportunity for an education. McDonogh endowed the largest private gift that the Orleans Parish School System has ever received. His efforts also contributed to public education in Gretna.

The first McDonogh funded school in Jefferson Parish was erected in McDonoghville on the corner of Anson and Jefferson Streets in 1890. The



The original location of McDonogh #26 School.

property was purchased from Elizabeth Dast, widow of Augustin Roche. The wood frame school had six classrooms, each 20 x 30 feet, above a covered basement with brick piers. The school was designed for 210 students with a partition between the boys and girls. This was the first McDonogh #26 location; in 1912 an annex was added. The school was destroyed by arson in 1925. Gould Steam Fire Company #2 built their firehouse on that location in 1951.

The second McDonogh #26 was rebuilt two blocks away occupying the entire block surrounded by Jefferson, Virgil, Madison and Weidman Streets.

This impressive two story brick building with

13 classrooms, an auditorium plus a gymnasium, opened in 1927 only to once again be destroyed by arson in 1966. The school that stands on this site today was built in 1966, the third McDonogh #26.

After dedicating the first McDonogh #26 for white children, residents were promised a school for black children so they might also receive an education. Property was purchased on the corner of Jefferson and Cook streets in 1891 from Sebastian Roche. McDonogh #27 opened in 1892. This school had a wood frame covered basement with six classrooms and held 210 students. In 1939 and again in 1946 additional property was purchased to expand the site. In the 1970s a new McDonogh #27 opened on Virgil Street and Whitney Avenue.

The older school buildings on Jefferson were used as Jefferson Parish School System offices until they succumbed to fire in 1999. The annex is all that still remains on the property.

The first high school in present day Jefferson Parish was McDonogh #33, known as McDonogh Jefferson High School. This joint venture of Jefferson Parish and the McDonogh Commission was located at First Street and Ocean Avenue. The circa 1907 two story basement building held 12 rooms with a capacity of 300 students. It closed when Gretna High School opened in 1928. The building was used as a trade school afterwards but demolished in 1974, after being badly damaged by Hurricane Betsy in 1965.



McDonogh #27 School.

*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**

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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

### **Gretna Historical Society**

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