



# Gretna Chronicles



Gretna, Louisiana

Volume 32, Issue 11 An Official Publication of the Gretna Historical Society

November, 2022

## The President Presiding...

By Sylvia Schwarz, GHS President



Those of you who stayed home to watch the Saints lose the game missed a great GHS Birthday Party on October 20. Delicious food, drink, cake, friendship and fun! I would like to thank Councilman Mike Hinyub for the information on preservation that he presented. It was very relevant to the GHS Mission statement.

- **Nov. 10** - GHS Membership Meeting/Memorial - St. Joseph Gym @7 p.m. There will be voting for officers and board members. In November, we traditionally memorialize deceased members. Thank God we only had two members who passed this year:

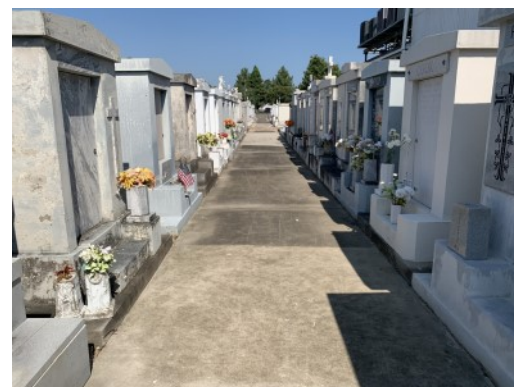
Paul Daigle and Merlin Schexnayder

- **Nov. 12** - Cemetery Tour tickets are now on sale at the White House. Call 504-362-3854 or stop by during the day. Tickets are \$25 each. Some time slots are already sold out!

The colorful notables being portrayed are: Hilda Ziifle Jung, Judge Lycester Trauth, Paul Carr, Henry Thoede, Mayor John Ehret, Kittie Strehle, Mayor William White and Emma Whiteside.

At this meeting, we will elect our new Officers and Board. The nominees are as follows:

President – Lisa LaFrance  
Vice President – Ray Markase  
Recording Secretary – Sylvia T. Schwarz  
Corresponding Secretary – Holly Williams  
Treasurer – Sarah Daigle  
Historian/Archivist – Stephanie Dieterich  
Parliamentarian – Sue McLetchie  
Sergeant-At-Arms – Blaine Daigle



Hook and Ladder Cemetery, site of the Cemetery Tour on Nov. 12.

Board Members at Large:  
Cheryl Amacker  
Val Coles  
Monica Naquin  
M. Helen Williams  
Chris Ziifle

- **Dec. 8** - GHS Membership Meeting/Installation of Officers/Christmas Production - St. Joseph Gym @7 p.m.

Since this will be my last month of being President, I would like to thank the current Board Members and you, our members, for all the work and support you have given me. It has been a challenging and interesting three years. I have enjoyed every minute. GHS survived the pandemic and came out better than it did going in. That is, thanks to all of you. Wishing you all a Blessed and Happy Thanksgiving.



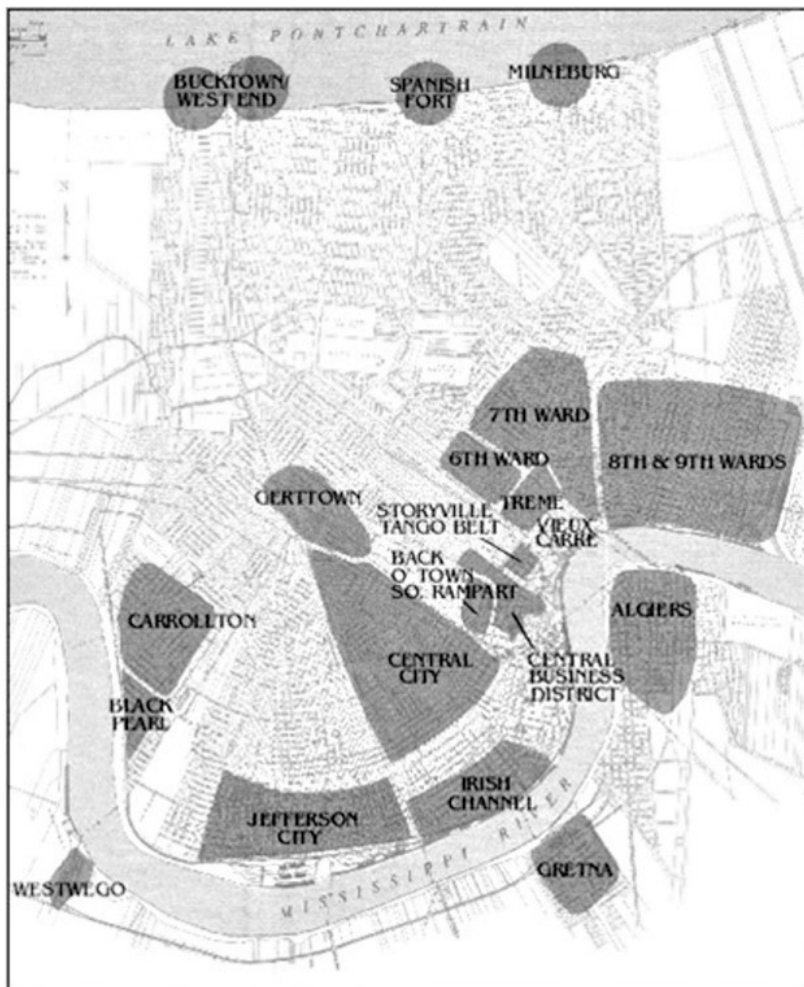
## ***Times Past —***

**By Stephanie Dieterich**

### **Gretna's "Big Easy"**

The Crescent City and The Big Easy are titles synonymous with New Orleans. The Crescent City needs no explanation as the City sits right in the crescent bend of the mighty Mississippi. The origins of "The Big Easy" are not so clearly defined, but it's said to have its beginnings right here in Gretna and not in New Orleans at all.

Dr. Maurice Martin, a native New Orleanian is credited as the first person to call New Orleans "The Big Easy" in print. He was a longtime professor of education at the University of North Carolina. A filmmaker, photographer, jazz musician and beat poet, Dr. Martinez wrote under the pen name Marty Most. Dr. Martinez published a book in 1964 called "New Orleans Blues" that included this poem: "Have you evah been to an ol' time jazz-man's funeral in mah hometown? It's called 'Big Easy' way, way down."



The Big Easy title was most likely originated by African Americans in the early 1900's.

This article appeared in the August 14, 1911 *Times-Democratic* newspaper. The location is likely the 700 block of Lafayette Street.

"The negro dance hall known as the "Big Easy" in East Green, in the rear of Gretna was destroyed by fire last night at 8:30 o'clock. The place was operated by Paul Batson. The blaze started on the outside, in the rear of the dance hall which adjoins a saloon operated by Batson which was also consumed. A third building, occupied as a residence by negroes also was destroyed. The fire department responded, but owing to the remote location and lack of water, could not check the flames, which burned out of themselves. The loss is estimated at \$2,500."

"The Big Easy" is where cornet player Buddy Bolden played. Louis Armstrong, when referring to Bolden once said "Man, that cat could blow a horn, he's a one man genius that was ahead of them all... too good for his time." (Continued on page 3)

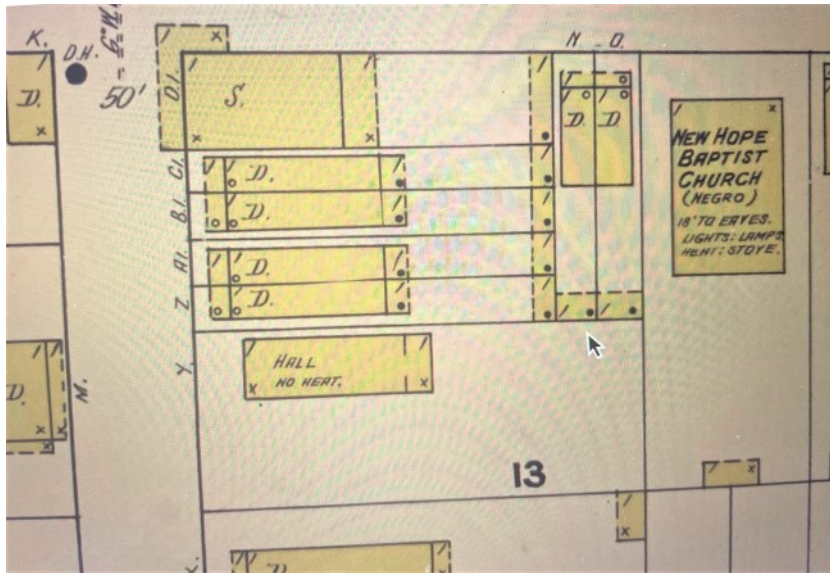
Jazz music was nurtured in a variety of neighborhoods, even on the West Bank, as this Jazz Neighborhoods Map shows.

### ***Welcome To Our New Members:***

Charlene Attardo, Karen Attardo Stone, Anne Finney and Roxanne Arocha



## Times Past — Gretna’s “Big Easy”, Continued



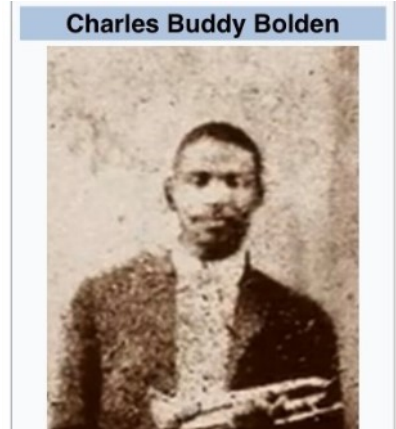
This early Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Gretna shows the corner of Lafayette and Seventh Street, the likely location of the Big Easy dance hall.

Near the Gretna ferry landing was “The Brick House,” another jazz joint where Louis Armstrong met his first wife, a 21 year-old Gretna native named Daisy Parker. The couple married in 1918 when Louis was 17.

The couple adopted three year-old Clarence Armstrong, the son of Louis’s cousin Flora who died shortly after giving birth. Louis would spend the rest of his life taking care of Clarence who was mentally impaired due to a head injury from falling off of the porch. Louis’s marriage to Daisy Parker, however, was stormy and short-lived since she refused to give up her profession as a prostitute. Daisy died shortly after the divorce.



At right, Jazz great Buddy Bolden played at Gretna’s Big Easy dance hall. Below, right, is a *Times-Picayune* article from March, 1922, about a shooting at another Gretna jazz joint, the Brick House. At left is famed jazz trumpet player Louis Armstrong and Clarence Armstrong, whom Louis helped raise. Below left is a 1921 photo showing Louis Armstrong, his mother, Mary, and his sister, Beatrice.



### TWO GREटना MEN HELD IN SHOOTING

Sheriff Denies Story He Threatened Bucktown Citizen.

Charges of shooting and wounding were preferred against George Moullet and Hylas Stiles by Deputy Sheriff John Burke, Wednesday morning, as the result of the affair at the “Brick House,” Gretna, Tuesday night, in which Elmer Roupnich was dangerously wounded while Moullet and Stiles are said to have been shooting at a hat. As both men fired, it was not clear which one was responsible for the injury, Sheriff Dauenhauer ordered the charges against both. Moullet first was arrested, then paroled by the sheriff, who, how-

ever, ordered him locked up again Tuesday night. Sheriff Dauenhauer suspended Moullet from duty pending disposition of the case.

A formal charge of murder was lodged against Paul Batson by City Marshal Peter Trouillet as the result of the killing of Charles M. Guey at Batson’s soft drink establishment in McDonoghville. He is held without bail in the parish prison pending action by the grand jury. Guey’s funeral will be held Thursday afternoon at the family home, 1029 Madison street, McDonoghville. Guey was 25 years old and a native of McDonoghville. He was a member of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America. He had been employed in the railroad shops.

Sheriff J. B. Dauenhauer, Jr., said that there was no truth in Theodore Bruening’s assertion that he threatened to shoot him at Bucktown Tuesday night.

“Bruening ‘butted into’ a disturbance that occurred during several maskers and I warned him I would arrest him if he created a disturbance,” the sheriff said.

*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**

is published for the members and friends of GHS

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

## **Gretna Historical Society**

<https://www.gretnahistoricalsociety.org/>

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

Phone: 504.362.3854

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

Facebook: @GHSGretnaLA

- Sylvia Schwarz .....President
- James Rolf.....Vice-President
- Cheryl Amacker.....Recording Secretary
- Lisa LaFrance.....Corresponding Secretary
- Sarah Daigle.....Treasurer
- Stephanie Dieterich.....Historian and Archivist
- Sue McLetchie.....Parliamentarian
- Holly Williams.....Sergeant-at-Arms
- Ray Markase.....Board Member at Large
- Monica Naquin .....Board Member at Large
- M. Helen Williams.....Board Member at Large
- Chris Ziifle.....Board Member at Large
- Judy LeBlanc.....Director of Facilities