



Gretna Chronicles

Gretna, Louisiana

Volume 33, Issue 2 An Official Publication of the Gretna Historical Society

February, 2023

Notice to Couples in Love!

The Gretna Historical Society invites you to marry in a truly romantic and awesome way without breaking the bank! Make your dream of a beautiful wedding a reality on Valentine's Day 2023. Enjoy a unique wedding experience in a beautiful setting in the spirit of Gretna Green Scotland!

Valentine's Day, Tuesday, February 14, 2023

GHS Museum Complex

209 Lafayette Street, Gretna, Louisiana

Services provided include:

- An official ceremony performed by Judge Vernon Wilty, the 'Marrying Judge.'
- Couples are escorted to the wedding site by a Scottish bagpiper, a Scottish tradition.
- Wedding vows are sealed by a blacksmith in the tradition of Gretna Green Scotland.
- An official wedding photograph by a professional wedding photographer at no charge.
- A wedding proclamation from the City of Gretna.
- Many more surprises of the day!

To schedule your Valentine's Day wedding, call Judge Wilty at 504.364.2760.



Hook & Ladder Cemetery Tour Proceeds Donated to the City

GHS, which hosts the annual Hook & Ladder Cemetery Tour, proudly donated \$4,850, the proceeds of the 2022 event, to the City of Gretna at the January City Council Meeting. President Lisa LaFrance made the presentation on behalf of the society to Mayor Belinda Constant. The money will go toward upkeep of the historic cemetery. Present at the council meeting were, left to right, James Rolf, Finance Committeeman; Board Member Holly Williams; Mayor Belinda Constant; Board Member Mary Helen Williams; and President Lisa LaFrance.

Welcome to our New Member
Philip Taylor

January Meeting Discussion

GHS President Lisa LaFrance introduced Nicolas P. Cali, Regional Director of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-West who was guest speaker at the January Meeting. Gretna Councilman Jackie Berthelot spoke about the administration's handling of local weather disasters and flooding.



Historian Stephanie Dieterich told guests that her article, "The Bell Crevasse" that was published in the November 2021 *Chronicles* newsletter might be interesting to reread after hearing Mr. Cali's talk. The Bell Crevasse was a major flood event that devastated the Westbank in 1848. The Nov 2021 newsletter can be found on the website at www.gretnahistorical society.org.



GHS Events for 2023

- Feb 9 @ 7 Mardi Gras Dress-up/ General Meeting at St. Joseph Gym
- Feb 14 Blacksmith Shop Valentine's Day Weddings- GHS Complex
- Mar 9 @ 7 General Meeting at St. Joseph Gym
- Apr 13 @ 7 General Meeting at St. Joseph Gym
- Apr 16 GHS Spring Tour of Homes (Ticketed Event)
- May 11 @ 6 Crawfish Boil at GHS Complex (Ticketed Event)
- June 8 @ 7 General Meeting at St. Joseph Gym
- July 13 @ 7 General Meeting at St. Joseph Gym
- Aug 10 @ 7 General Meeting at St. Joseph Gym
- Sept 14 @ 6 Barbeque at GHS Complex
- Oct 12 @ 7 General Meeting at St. Joseph Gym
- TBA Hook & Ladder Cemetery Tour (Ticketed Event)
- Nov 9 @ 7 Memorial/ General Meeting at St. Joseph Gym
- Dec 14 @ 7 Christmas Party



Members: Please review these Amendment Changes to be voted on at Feb 9 Meeting:

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
(Proposed Amendment in red-January 2023)	
OF	STATE OF LOUISIANA
GRETNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY	PARISH OF JEFFERSON

ARTICLE II

The Gretna Historical Society is organized exclusively for charitable, educational, and scientific purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations described under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, **or individual(s), provided the donation meets the primary purpose of this corporation.**

BY-LAWS (Proposed Amendment-2023) FOR GRETNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ARTICLE I Preamble

10. Institution of programs and projects for stimulating and promoting public support in honoring and maintaining the heritage of the City of Gretna and its people **on the Westbank of Jefferson Parish, Louisiana.**



***Times Past* —**

By Stephanie Dieterich

Mardi Gras

The History of Mardi Gras dates back to before Christianity when Pagans celebrated various spring and fertility rites that included celebrations, fasting and debauchery of all sorts. When the Christians tried to convert the Pagans to Christianity, these rites were so ingrained in the people, they were allowed to be absorbed into the new religion. Carnival is now celebrated in Christian countries all over the world.

This day is known as Carnival in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro, the largest celebration in the world. Since the 1600s England and Ireland have celebrated Pancake Day where they use up forbidden Lenten foods such as eggs, milk, sugar and butter to make pancakes!

Shrove Tuesday refers to the day before Lent when Catholics went to confession and were "shriven" (absolved) of their sins. It's celebrated as Carneval in Italy and Mardi Gras in France.

There has been some controversy over whether New Orleans or Mobile held the first Mardi Gras in this country. What is known is that Pierre Le Moyne d' Iberville, a 29 year old Canadian French explorer and his 19 year old brother, Jean Baptiste Le Moyne Sieur d' Bienville, were exploring the lower Mississippi. Their party made camp 60 miles below what is now New Orleans on March 3, 1699, the eve of Mardi Gras. He named that spot "Point du Mardi Gras." This is considered the first celebration of the holiday in the U.S.

Under the French, New Orleans Mardi Gras celebrations would grow over time with society balls, street parties and parades. When the Spanish took over in the 1760s they viewed the celebrations as depraved and shut them down. It wasn't until the early 1800s when the U.S. took over that the merriment began once again. New Orleanians saw their first Mardi Gras parade in 1837, however, and the Mystic Krewe of Comus parade and ball really put Mardi Gras on the map! The Twelfth Night Revelers paraded in 1870 and can be credited with the beginnings of the first King Cake. Two years later, Rex, King of Carnival, made his debut and introduced the Mardi Gras colors of purple, green and gold.



A flower decorated automobile for the Floral Parade at Mardi Gras in Mobile, Alabama 1905.



Mardi Gras celebrations in New Orleans, circa the late 1800s.



Mobile claims the first Mardi Gras celebration, The Boeuf Gras Society, was started in 1710. Its first parade was held the following year when a giant bull head rolled down Mobile's Dauphin Street.

New Orleans claims the first Mardi Gras in 1699 but New Orleans was not founded until 19 years later in 1718 by Bienville. Mobile, founded in 1702 by Iberville, had its first parade in 1711. What is not mentioned is that the 60 miles below New Orleans where the brothers made camp is actually now Plaquemines Parish, across the river from Fort Jackson. Maybe it's Plaquemines Parish that should claim the first Mardi Gras.

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
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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

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)

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 \$25 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/>

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- Lisa LaFrance.....President**
- Ray Markase.....Vice-President**
- Sylvia Schwarz.....Recording Secretary**
- Holly Williams.....Corresponding Secretary**
- Sarah Daigle.....Treasurer**
- Stephanie Dieterich.....Historian and Archivist**
- Sue McLetchie.....Parliamentarian**
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