



Gretna Chronicles

Gretna, Louisiana

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Crawfish Heaven!

The Annual Crawfish Boil held in the backyard of the GHS Complex was very successful, a happy time for all. The weather held out and only a drop or two of rain was felt as the tables and chairs were being broken down. Thanks to all who donated goodies for dessert.

The set up crew (group picture, below) did a wonderful job, and the crawfish were delicious. Good job, Ray!





Times Past —

By Stephanie Dieterich

Ferry Memories!

Before the GNO bridge opened in 1958, most Jefferson Parish Westbankers crossed the river by ferryboat. The Walnut Street ferry by Audubon Park crossed to Westwego at Sala Ave., the Napoleon Ave. ferry crossed to Marrero at Barataria Blvd., the Louisiana Ave. ferry crossed to Harvey at Destrehan Ave. and the Jackson Ave. ferry crossed to Gretna at Huey P. Long Ave.



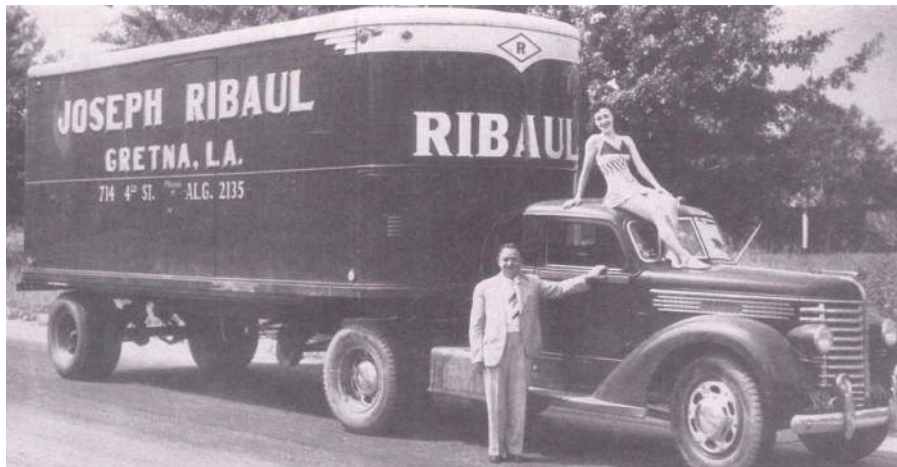
The Gretna ferry house.

Gretna, the seat of government, with its downtown businesses, shopping district and bus terminal, was a very busy location. The buses that ran included the Gretna-Algiers Ferry, Gretna Belt, Algiers Loop, Marrero Belt and the Westwego Belt. The buses could take you almost anywhere on the Westbank, as well as to the Algiers Ferry that crossed to Canal St.

Automobiles waiting for the ferry would line up on both Huey P. Long Ave. and Front Street. The Thomas H. Pickles and the Edwin N. Bisso were the names of two of the ferries. "One armed Louie," a one-armed police officer directed the hectic traffic. As you waited in your un-airconditioned car, a one-armed newspaper hawker yelled "papier." You could purchase from him one of the two daily newspapers without getting out of your car. He used a money changing belt to give out change.** A hot tamale stand provided a bite to eat. Once you heard the ferry horn blow and knew you missed the ferry, you would have time to grab a beer from one of the bars on the street!

Students rode the Gretna ferry free of charge for Catholic high schools such as Redemptorist, De La Salle and Dominican. Jefferson Parish Westbank had no private or Catholic high schools or hospitals at the time. West Jefferson Hospital didn't open until 1961. Many physicians, eye doctors, dentists and such had offices across the river, in places like the Maison Blanche and Pere Marquette buildings.

The French Market was a popular destination for Westbank farmers, dairymen and fishermen selling their goods as well as locals purchasing them. Churches, funeral homes, restaurants, movie theaters, Canal Street with its large department stores, the Audubon Zoo and its swimming pools and, of course, Mardi Gras parades were other reasons to cross the river. (Continued on Page 3)



Joseph Ribaul stands before one of his trucks, with his daughter, Virginia. The company called itself the "most reliable drayman on the West Bank," and the trucks used the ferry often.

CALENDAR

- June 8 @ 7 pm General Meeting at St. Joseph Gym**
- July 13 @ 7 pm General Meeting at St. Joseph Gym**
- Aug 17 @ 7 pm Annual Wine Tasting at Cultural Center for the Arts**

Before the GNO was built, the ferry franchise was privately owned and leased to the highest bidder for 10-year terms. The Bisso Company operated the Gretna ferry and posted these prices in 1952 and again in 1962:

1 passenger on foot	.10
2 passenger auto	.25
5 passenger auto	.30
1 ton truck	.30
2 ton truck	.60
3 ton truck	.90
4 ton truck	\$1.10
5 ton truck	\$1.30
Hearse	.40
Bicycle or motorcycle	.05
Every passenger on horse or mule	.10 each
Vehicle drawn by 2 horses	.40
Vehicle drawn by 3 or more horses	.80



The Gretna ferry Thomas H. Pickles.

When the bridge tolls ended in 1965, the ferries could not compete and were sold to the State of Louisiana. The federal government footed 80 percent of the bill rebuilding new terminals, landings and upgrading the boats, with the Mississippi River Bridge Authority picking up the rest. Ridership continued to decline as operation costs increased. Unfortunately, on September 28, 2009, the historic Gretna-Jackson Ave. ferry route ended. It now only survives in our wonderful memories!

** About the photo below: There is some debate about the “one-armed man” since some locals remember the paper guy and some remember the policeman. Were there two one-armed men, by chance, or was it the same man with two occupations in two different time frames? We would love to have feedback on the one-armed man if one of our readers has more information.



The man at left is Johnny “Big Pants” Ribaul, and the one at right was known at “One-Armed Louie” Derbiney. Let us know if you can help identify them.

Welcome New Members!

Troy & Tammy Damico Williams
Lois Rockenbaugh
Angela Locicero

PRAYER DINNER

The annual Gretna Prayer Dinner will be held on Tuesday, June 27, at the Mel Ott Multipurpose Center, 2301 Belle Chasse Highway. The guest speaker will be Father Stephen Ryan, SBD, director and head of school at Archbishop Shaw High School. Ricky Templet, Jefferson Parish Councilman at Large, is the honorary chairman of the dinner.



Tickets are \$20 per person. Any GHS member who is interested in attending should call Judy LeBlanc at 504.362.3854 to reserve a seat. Checks can be dropped off at the Museum Complex or provided at the next membership meeting.

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

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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