



# Gretna Chronicles

Gretna, Louisiana

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## Wine Tasting Event to Toast Fire Station!

By M. Helen Williams

There is much excitement ahead for the Wine Tasting Social on August 14. For those new to GHS, here are some hints for the evening. You're going to Spain, with Spanish music playing softly as you arrive. So, wear your most Spanish piece of clothing or accessory in your closet since there will be a lovely Spanish setting photo op! Cata de vinos!

You are also given a charcuterie box as you arrive, your meal for the evening. You will enjoy being introduced to and served tastes of six fine vintages as you share your tasting experience with your tasting companions.

The industrious GHS Board decided to combine its mission of preservation with one of its favorite

member events of the year, the wine tasting! We went right to the money lady, GHS Treasurer Sarah Daigle to find out what that's all about.

"The Gretna Historical Society is currently raising funds to help cover the estimated \$30,000 cost of replacing the roof and making repairs to control the water intrusion on our beloved historic Fire Museum, located at 205 Lafayette Street in Old Gretna," Sarah said.

"As part of our fundraising efforts, we will kick off the Roof Fundraiser at the wine tasting event for our members on August 14, during which we will raffle themed gift baskets filled with local goods, gift certificates, and of course - wine! We are incredibly grateful to all who have supported our cause by donating toward the gift baskets.

"Thank you so much for considering this

***Built in 1859 as the Crockett Fire Hall, the Louisiana State Fire Museum is home of the David Crockett Volunteer Fire Company No. 1, organized in 1841.***



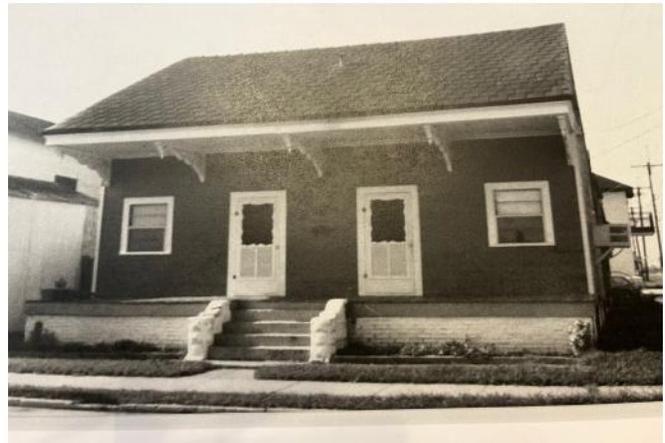
opportunity to support local history and help preserve our vintage Fire Station, a cherished piece of Gretna's heritage. We hope to partner with the community in making this Roof Fundraising event a great success.

"To learn more about our mission and the impact of our preservation work, please feel free to visit our website," Sarah said. The website address is <https://www.gretnahistoricalsociety.org>

## First Gretna Mayor's Home Transition

According to the 1910 Census, before becoming the first mayor of Gretna in 1913, John Ehret and his family lived at 400 Newton St. He owned the circa 1860 Creole cottage and his occupation was a baker. The dwelling was listed on the National Register as Inventory # 310 and is described as a Creole Cottage with Italianate brackets, modern windows and doors as well as asbestos siding. The home has since been more accurately restored to its original design with door transoms and elongated windows and dormers added. The lovely home is still occupied today.

This information came from the U. S. Census which can be a treasure trove of valuable information listing such things as your address, age, spouse and siblings or anyone else living in the home. It tells if you rented or owned the home and also its value or rent. It sometimes asked if you owned a radio. Evidently you were something if you owned a radio! Occupations, what children were in school and the birthplace of parents are listed as well!



Mayor John Ehret's home in 1984.



Mayor John Ehret's home in 2025.

### CALENDAR

- Aug 14 @ 6 pm Wine Tasting Social at St Joseph Gym.** Ticketed event - Wine Social \$5 per Person - Members only! Members **MUST** have a ticket to attend. Tickets available before event at the White House, Tuesday - Saturday, 10 am–3 pm
- Sept 11 @ 6 pm Membership Meeting at St. Joseph Gym.**
- Oct 9 @ 6 pm Barbecue & Birthday Party at GHS Complex Backyard.**
- Oct 25 Hook & Ladder Cemetery Tour - Ticketed Event \$30 per person.** Light refreshments at the Red Maple and tour - you pick your tour time. Tickets available now at White House & at the August meeting.

### Cemetery Tour 2025 Planning Meeting

Cemetery Tour meeting will be held on Thursday, August 21 at 6:00 p.m. at the Coles House at 516 Lavoisier Street in Gretna. If needed, Paul Coles can be reached at 504-450-8232.

#### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Randy & Lisa Carr

Diana LeMeunier

#### WELCOME BACK

Michelle Cherry



## *Times Past —*

By Stephanie Dieterich

### *Harvey Castle, Jefferson Parish Courthouse*

The Harvey Castle was built around 1844 on land along the Destrehan Canal (Harvey Canal) belonging to Nicolas Noel Destrehan. Built in the Gothic style, it closely resembled the U.S. Marine Hospital built in McDonoghville a few years earlier. The “castle” was constructed by free men of color who resided in Freetown (McDonoghville) of materials from local sources. The bricks were made in Harvey and the cement was made of oyster shells and river sand.

The three-story home of Louisa Destrehan and her husband, Joseph Hale Harvey, was said to have 11 rooms, a spacious center hall with grand twin staircases of walnut. There were elegant touches throughout the home including Italian marble fireplaces. The Harvey family lived in the home until 1870.

From Jefferson Parish’s beginnings in 1825, the majority of its population was on the East Bank. New Orleans had already annexed the Jefferson Parish cities of Lafayette and Jefferson and in 1874, it annexed the City of Carrollton which was serving as the seat of Parish Government. This created a much larger New Orleans footprint and population, but also reduced Jefferson Parish’s East Bank population. The Westbank became the most populous area of the parish.

The Jefferson Parish Police Jury also needed a new location for their courthouse. In 1874, the Police Jury signed a lease to rent Harvey Castle for use as a courthouse.

They took up occupancy despite lacking legal authority to actually pay the rent, which they didn’t do. After waiting three years, Louise Destrehan finally filed a lawsuit for the \$3,400 owed. The judge ruled against her. With unfulfilled hopes that they would buy the building, she finally evicted the freeloaders in 1884.

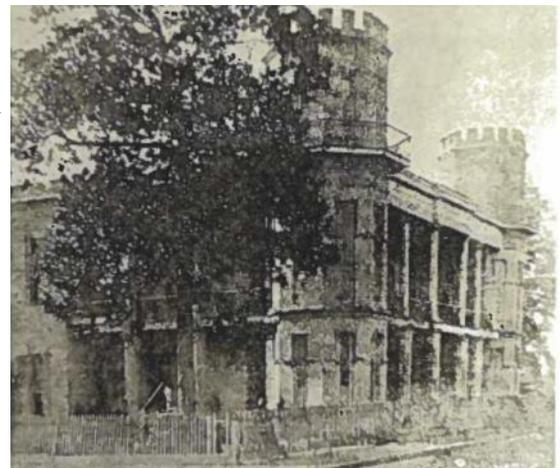
By 1908 Harvey Castle was in a state of disrepair and used as a tenement building. In 1924 it was demolished when the federal government purchased the canal and widened it to form part of the Intercoastal Waterway System.



An oil painting of the Harvey Castle.



An etching of Harvey Castle from the direction of the Harvey Canal.



Harvey Castle as a tenement house shortly before it was demolished. (Library of Congress photo)

*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 \$30 per person. Monthly meetings are held at the St. Joseph Complex Gym at 7th and Newton Streets on the second Thursday of every month at 6:00 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

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- Blaine Daigle.....Vice President**
- Sylvia Schwarz.....Recording Secretary**
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