



Gretna Chronicles

Gretna, Louisiana

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November, 2025

Birthday Celebrations at October Meeting



Birthday celebrants were: l to r, front row, Dirk Hepting 89, Judy Lotz 87, Barbara Daigle 87, Ronny Guidry, 85 and, back row, Val Coles, who is NOT 85, but IS the GHS President and Janet Parker, 85.

The October meeting at the museum complex was the annual barbecue deliciously prepared by Board Members Sarah Daigle, Judy LeBlanc, Paul Coles and Val Coles, with Blaine Daigle and Dwight Maness manning the BBQ pits.

Members celebrated the birthday of Gretna Historical Society and GHS members in attendance who had reached 85 years with a large cake!

The Kittie Strehle and Ignatius Strehle Houses were open for members to visit and everyone left well-fed and happy. The Ignatius Strehle House is now completely refurbished and the Kittie Strehle House is in process of being curated with a target completion date of April 2026.

Retired Mayor Ronnie C. Harris will be Guest Speaker at the November Meeting. He will be talking about historical society accomplishments during his tenure of office.

CALENDAR

- Nov. 13 @ 6 pm** Membership Meeting at St. Joseph Gym.
- Dec. 11 @ 6 pm** Christmas Party at St. Joseph Gym.
- Jan. 8 @ 6 pm** Membership Meeting at St. Joseph

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

David Gassen
Ellen Gassen
Pat LeBoeuf



Memorial

The November meeting will include a memorial for Lois Wilson Warner, Kenneth "Ken" Pellegrin, Frank Maness Jr., Hazel Tauzin Maness, James "Jim" Hunter, and Jack DiFranco, deceased members this past year. If you know of other GHS Members that we lost in any year that have not been memorialized, please call GiGi Bergeron at 504-481-6339.

NOMINATIONS

November is the month when GHS addresses officers and board of directors for the next year. There was a motion by the Board to nominate the following to serve on the 2026 GHS Board. The decision was unanimous.

President - Val Coles
Vice President - Blaine Daigle
Recording Secretary - Jeannie Radosta
Corresponding Secretary - Holly Williams
Treasurer - Sarah Daigle
Historians/Archivists - Stephanie Dieterich
Lisa LaFrance
Parliamentarian - Sylvia Schwarz
Sergeant at Arms - Judy LeBlanc
Board Member - Publicity - M. Helen Williams
Board Member - Programs - Paul Coles
Board Member - Dwight Maness
Board Member - Rene Poche

We currently have 12 board members and consider this a complete board. However, as a GHS member, if you choose to run for one of these positions, the following by-laws must be observed:

1. The name of any member in good standing may be placed in nomination for election to the Board of Directors by a petition of ten (10) members in good standing of this organization providing that member has given written acceptance of the nomination.
2. All nominating petitions must be filed with the Secretary of this organization at least ten days prior to the date of the election of Board members by the membership.

(Note: Filing Date Deadline: 11/3/25. Petitions must be sent to the Recording Secretary by hand delivery to the GHS White House, 209 Lafayette St., Gretna, LA or emailed to: directoroffacilities@gretnahistoricalsociety.org ASAP to let your intentions be known.)

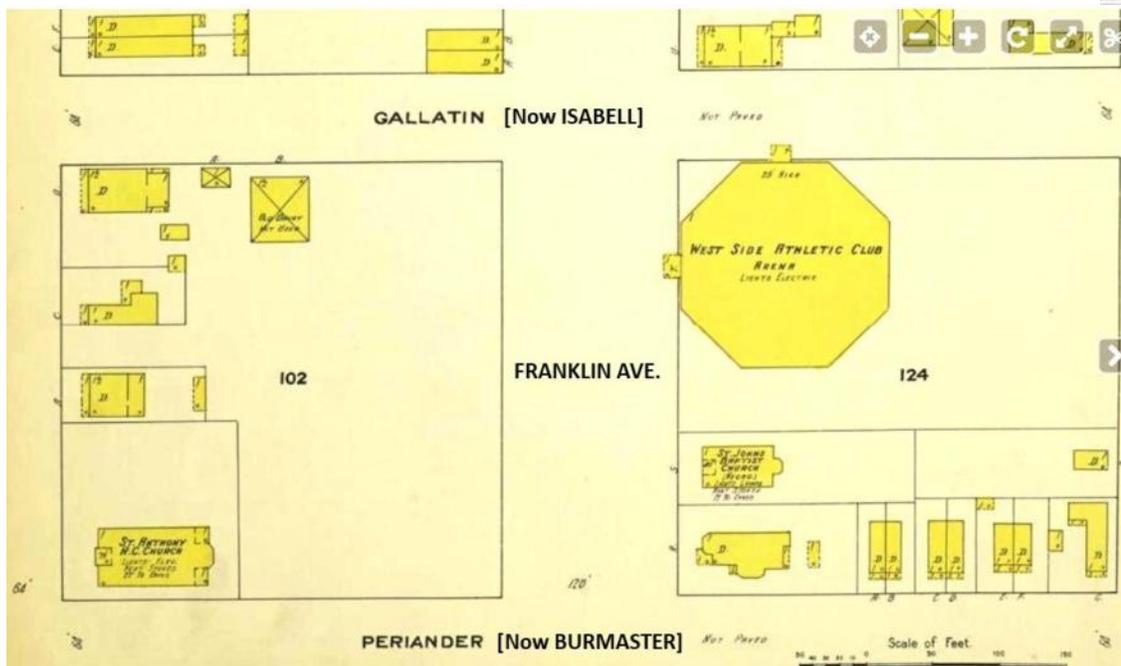
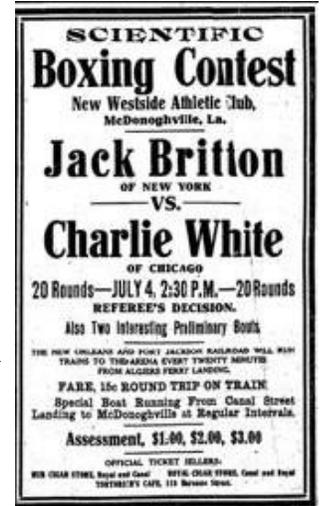
If you are interested in serving on the GHS Board of Directors or in getting more involved in volunteering for events, monthly meetings or annual special events, please also contact Val Coles at 504-912-6718.

We pride ourselves on preservation, education, and community in everything we do in the Gretna Historical Society. We look forward to strengthening our organization with your participation.



Times Past — By Stephanie Dieterich A “Fight” for Education

The original St. Anthony Catholic Church of McDonoghville was dedicated in 1905 when Father Theophile Stenmans, the pastor in charge at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Gretna, built the chapel to provide a house of worship conveniently located for the Catholics in that end of St. Joseph Parish. In 1919, the first St. Anthony School was built, staffed by Sisters of the Perpetual Adoration from the Infant Jesus Convent of St. Joseph Church. The school was closed when St. Joseph could no longer furnish teaching Sisters.



The 1909 Sanborn Fire Map shows the location of St. Anthony Church at lower left and the octagon-shaped West Side Athletic Club, later the site of the new St. Anthony School.

Meanwhile, across Franklin Street the Westside Athletic Club Arena, a huge octagonal building with seating for an astonishing 5,500 patrons opened in 1908. These matches appear to have been a big deal!

The Arena hosted prize fights and World Champion Boxing Matches. Most tickets were sold in New Orleans and at the Arena. So popular

were these events that counterfeit tickets were printed! Ferry service and trains shuttled spectators across the river from New Orleans to McDonoghville and back. It was open for twenty years before closing its doors.

In 1939, 1948 and 1950 three parcels of land were acquired for a new St. Anthony School on the site of the old West Side Athletic Club Arena. The new school broke ground in 1954. In 1963 the original St. Anthony School was moved across Franklin Street and placed on the new school grounds for additional classrooms where it remains a functioning elementary school.



St. Anthony School, built in 1919.

The present St. Anthony Church on Franklin Ave. was dedicated in 1967. The original church, located on Monroe Street behind the present church, had serious damage from Hurricane Betsy and was later demolished.

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 \$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/>

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Val Coles.....President
Blaine Daigle.....Vice President
Sylvia Schwarz.....Recording Secretary
Holly Williams.....Corresponding Secretary
Sarah Daigle.....Treasurer
Stephanie Dieterich.....Historian/Archivist
Judy LeBlanc.....Sergeant-at-Arms
Lisa LaFranceParliamentarian
M. Helen Williams.....Board Member/Editor & Publicity
Paul Coles.....Board Member/Hospitality & Programs
Dwight Maness.....Board Member at Large
Joe Miller.....Board Member at Large