



Gretna Chronicles

Gretna, Louisiana



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January, 2026

Be Glad It's 2026, not 1926!



Times Past —

By Stephanie Dieterich

As 2025 comes to a close and we celebrate the new year of 2026, we should be thankful for what we have.

Looking back 100 years to 1926, The United States was celebrating its sesquicentennial, meaning 150 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

America was deep into Prohibition and the roaring '20s. Mafia crime bosses ran hidden speakeasies around the country that sold illegal alcohol and played risqué Jazz music to the free spirited. Over in Gretna, within the Free State of Jefferson, there was no need to hide, since gambling and drinking were not prohibited and the government simply looked the other way!

A few notable births in 1926 were Queen Elizabeth 11, Fidel Castro and Marilyn Monroe. The year would see Miami devastated by a large hurricane, the first transatlantic phone call from London to New York, United Airlines, founded as Varney, became the first commercial airline in the country, the first demonstration of a television was held in London, and SAT tests were first administered to 8,000 high school students. The numbering of United States highway system was introduced, and the United States signed the Panama Canal Treaty. Yankee Babe Ruth, the first ever to do so hit 3 home runs in the World Series against the Saint Louis Cardinals.

Meanwhile on Jefferson Parish's Westbank there were no bridges to cross the Mississippi River, only ferries. There were no hospitals, most babies were born at home. Few automobiles traveled the dirt and gravel streets. The majority of residents still had outhouses and only bathed once a week in a metal tub. Homes without water lines received their water from cisterns. Heating was still from coal as gas was not yet available.

Electricity was still in its infancy, but you could now light a room with the flip of a switch or pull of a chain. In 1926 the first automatic pop up toaster from Toastmaster, the Electrolux vacuum cleaner and the Kitchen Aid mixer were introduced. Electric washing machines and electric irons were marketed to ladies to make their lives easier.

Wildly popular radio sets were available if you could afford one. As a matter of fact, a question on the census asked if you owned a radio. Electric refrigerators, although available, were still out of reach for most people who continued to use their ice box.

So when you wake up to a heated or cooled house, are able to brush your teeth and flush your toilet with running water, wash and dry a load of clothes in machines and drive your car on paved streets, be thankful, since your grandparents didn't have that opportunity!

Happy New Year!

Be sure to hear the amazing new PHILCO before you buy any radio

The new Balanced Tube Radio... **\$129.50**... LOWEST FOR ONLY...

EXTRA HOURS
The new Philco...
WHOLESALE DISTRIBUTORS:
Walther Battery & Equipment Co., Inc.
Phone Any of the Following Dealers for Home Demonstration

J. E. CONNER, JR. ELECTRIC SERVICE, INC. MARION BLANCHÉ CO. PULASKI RADIO SHOP
101 N. 10th St. 101 N. 10th St. 101 N. 10th St. 101 N. 10th St.
"L" BELL FOR RADIO ELBERT SERVICE MOBILE RADIO CO. ROSE FOR RADIO
101 N. 10th St. 101 N. 10th St. 101 N. 10th St. 101 N. 10th St.
PAUL BREYER D. H. HOLMES CO., LTD. CLARK RADIO STORE HANK HANOWAY CO.

This ad shows a 1929 radio for \$129. It would be equivalent to \$2,500 today.

Christmas Program Celebrates the Golden Age of TV 'Those Were the Days!'



CALENDAR

Jan. 8 @ 6 pm Membership Meeting at St. Joseph Gym.

Feb. 12 @ 6 pm Membership Meeting at St. Joseph Gym.

Feb. 14 Blacksmith Shop Valentine Weddings.

Mar. 12 @ 6 p.m. Membership Meeting at St. Joseph Gym.

NOTE: "Dues are Due" effective January 1 for year 2026. Dues are \$30 annually. You can pay at the next meeting or drop in at the GHS office.

**WELCOME
NEW MEMBERS**

**Dana Panepinto
Steven M. Mulholland**



Thanks, Everyone

Thanks to Gretna Historical Society Members for continuing to belong to our very special organization, and special thanks to our Board who does all of the heavy lifting to keep the Society running. Thanks to Judy LeBlanc, property director, and support peeps Janet Parker and Garland Gaspard, who is also our chef! Thanks to Fr. Gary at St. Joseph Church!

Thanks to the Chronicle Editor, to Stephanie Dieterich who gives us great Times Past stories, Carol Schlueter, our newspaper layout person, Judy who does the mailing and all who proofread. Thanks to those who take pictures when the editor is in need. These people work so you can enjoy the Chronicles, which allows you to keep up with Society news, as well as learn more about historical Gretna.

Remember that GHS "Dues are Due" for 2026. Please pay at the next meeting or drop in at the White House and pay there. See you at the January 8, 2026 meeting.

Thanks to Ray Markase and all the performers and volunteers for the wonderful and outstanding production you gave to us at our Christmas Party 2025. You are remarkable and so very talented!



Goodbye, 2025 ... Hello, 2026!

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

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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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