



Gretna Chronicles



Gretna, Louisiana

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Old Homes, Young Homes & Historic Homes in Between!

The “oldest” home on the GHS Tour of Homes 2026 (**shown at right**) is located at 624 Lafayette Street and dates back to 1885. It was a terribly neglected rental for many years and has been meticulously restored to its original state.

Because of this neglect, not much of the original home could be saved. The previous owner was able to salvage the front facade of the home’s exterior, as well as the transoms above the inside doors, the fireplaces and one of the original bathtubs. He meticulously rebuilt the home yet keeping it authentic and mirrored to its past. The now single family dwelling is an eyesore no more.



This 1959 Mid-century home (**shown at left**) is the “youngest” on the upcoming Tour. It was built by GHS member Mary Ribaul Bowes, who said the brick on the home was salvaged from a New Orleans library being torn down at the time.

Lisa Clapp, the new owner, felt the house was solid, but the all brick front made the entry dark. Two large windows were added, creating much needed light where she now displays her beloved vintage Japanese wedding kimono for everyone to enjoy. Lisa describes her home as Mid-century with

an Asian Vibe, and that fits! She is an avid cook and the kitchen allows her to create while conversing with guests in the chef kitchen. Her vintage Chanel perfume bottles are proudly displayed in her bath.

A historic home that you will also enjoy (**room shown at right**) is the newly refreshed Kittie Strehle House, a part of the GHS Museum Complex. This is the only Creole cottage in the New Orleans area furnished for museum purposes. It was built circa 1845 by German immigrants Claudius Strehle and his wife, Catherine Nuss. They were the parents of Kittie Strehle, a teacher for 57 years and the last of nine children to live in the home.

The GHS Spring Home Tour is set for April 12. For Tour tickets, go to the White House at 209 Lafayette Street in Gretna to purchase a ticket for \$25 from 1:00 -4:00 pm. Besides the seven lovely homes to visit on the Tour, included are the five sites in the GHS Museum Complex, plus the German-American Cultural Center at 519 Huey P. Long Ave. You go at your own pace until the Tour ends at 5:00 pm.



Here Came the Judge!

GHS member and Retired Federal Judge Jay Wilkinson, guest speaker at the March meeting gave an entertaining and informative talk about "The Sicilian St. Joseph Altar."

His words were peppered with Italian highlights as he stood close to the almost completed Altar being lovingly prepared by the St. Joseph Women's Club.

The Judge introduced his fellow Shaw High alumni friend, Mike Giglio, who supplied him with many of the pictures that Wilkinson used in his presentation.

Father Frank Carabello, retired longtime Pastor of St. Joseph Church and an Italian himself, spoke about the Altars held at the church once he became pastor.



And Another Judge—the Marrying Kind—Came!



To the delight of everyone, Gretna's favorite "Marrying Judge" Vernon Wilty, who officiates at the annual GHS Blacksmith Shop Weddings, presented to President Val Coles a check for \$1,200, his fee earned at this year's event.

Valentine's Day is the happiest day of the year at the GHS Museum Complex as the brides and grooms and their families celebrate this special time when Judge Wilty does his thing to take them into wedded bliss. Thank you, Judge, for your generosity!

CALENDAR

- Apr 9** @6 pm Membership Meeting at St. Joseph Gym. Guest speaker: Gretna Fire Chief Mike Labruzzo.
- Apr 12** Ticketed event. Spring Tour of Homes.
- May 13** Ticketed event. Crawfish Boil @ 6 pm at GHS Complex Backyard. Members always bring desserts for this event.
- June 11** @6 pm Membership Meeting at St. Joseph Gym.

Garry Vedros Awarded



Congratulations to Garry Vedros, longtime GHS Member who was named Employee of the Year for 2025 in the Jefferson Parish Recreation Department. Parish President Cynthia Lee Sheng presented the award.

It was proclaimed, "Through his hard work and dedication, Garry not only enriches the lives of our Golden Agers, but also strengthens bonds and continuously helps promote the recreation department!"

**Welcome
New
Members**
David Breaud
Nancy South

**Welcome
Back!**
Christine South
Noel Cieutat

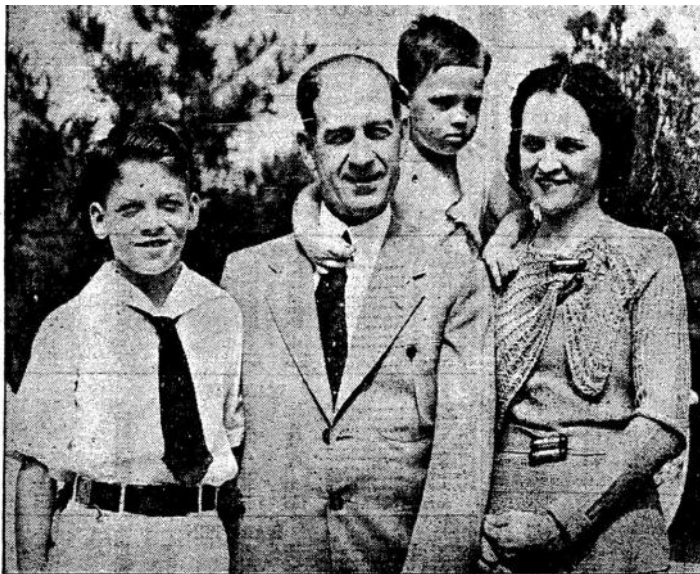


Times Past — Historic Home Steeped in Generations of History

By Stephanie Dieterich

When this circa 1920's home at 836 Huey P. Long was first built, the address was 836 Copernicus, since the street name had not yet changed. The home was built for Judge Archie T. Higgins (1894-1945). Higgins attended Tulane Law School and was in the same class with Huey P. Long. Higgins served as the City of Gretna Attorney from 1916 -1918. He served two terms in the Louisiana House of Representatives from 1920-1924. He was an appellate court judge in 1929. In 1939 he was elected and served as Justice of The Louisiana State Supreme Court until his death in 1945. Archie Higgins' son, Archie Higgins Jr., grew up in the home. He was a highly decorated pilot of the Army Air Corps in WWII, and was one of the founders of the WWII Museum.

Archie Higgins brother, Lemuel Higgins, was Jefferson Parish Superintendent of Schools. Higgins High School is named after him.



JUDGE ARCHIE T. HIGGINS, newest member of the Supreme court of Louisiana; MRS. HIGGINS, ARCHIE T. HIGGINS, JR. (A. T.), 10, and ROBERT ALLEN (BOBBIE) HIGGINS, 3. Judge Higgins defeated Judge Walter Gleason.

were painstakingly restored to their original condition as were the wood floors and trim. Below on the ground floor, a once dark, dreary storage basement has been transformed into living space with four bedrooms and three baths, a den, kitchenette and laundry. The new landscape compliments the home and completes the renovation. Gretna is proud Senator Alario and his family chose to purchase and restore this historic home, a home with so much history both past and future!

You can see this home as well as six others on GHS Spring Tour of Homes on April 12.

Real Estate for Sale

GRETNA

836 HUEY P. LONG AVE.

Built for gracious living, this raised single of excellent construction on beautiful landscaped grounds measuring 100 ft. x 125 ft., has enclosed screened front porch with ceiling fan, music room, lovely living room and dining room with beautiful chandeliers, breakfast room and butler's pantry, kitchen with built-in cabinets, 2 bedrooms with lockers and adjoining bath, spacious den which could be used as third bedroom and bath just off den. Cedar-lined storage lockers. Double floors, plaster walls, gas central heating. Apartment in basement with space for additional apts., enclosed double garage. Must be seen to be appreciated. Call today for appointment.

Now Senator John Alario, Trina, Jan and Eli call 836 Huey P. Long home. On our GHS 2024 tour, they graciously allowed visitors to see the home before any restoration began. Since then the exterior has been amazingly restored, keeping all of its original elements intact. The main raised floor that was once a three bedroom has been transformed into a primary suite with beautifully appointed baths and closets. The living and dining rooms are open and filled with light and the kitchen is stunning! Attention to detail is obvious; fixtures, textured wallpapers and tile work around. The wood windows

First Lt. Archie T. Higgins, Jr., son of Judge and Mrs. Higgins of Gretna, has recently received the Distinguished Flying Cross, according to word received here last week. Presently stationed in the western Pacific, Lt. Higgins has completed 37 missions. He wears the air medal with four oak leaf clusters, Lt. A. T. Higgins, Jr. the Philippine Liberation medal and three battle stars.

Young Higgins, who has taken part in recent raids on Japan, has been recommended for his sixth Air Medal.



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

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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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