



Gretna Chronicles



Gretna, Louisiana

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November 2020

The President Presiding...

By Sylvia Schwarz, GHS President



Greetings to all. Once again we are meeting via newsletter, but that does not mean things are not happening at GHS. The Board is meeting and taking care of business.

- The City of Gretna Council passed the usufruct agreement allowing GHS the use of the property on which the Depot and Caboose sit. Once



Thanks to Garland Gaspard for his work in the garden.

the appropriate signatures are affixed, we can move forward with the agreement for GEDA/Gretna Farmer's Market and Art Walk to use the Depot as their office. We thank Jon Majewski for all the work he did in making this happen.

- Garland Gaspard has worked his magic once again by redoing the gardens surrounding the fountain and other areas of the yard. Wow! What a difference. Great job Garland!
- Contingent upon what will be permissible, if anything, due to Covid-19, we may be able to have our annual December Christmas Party. The format will be different, but fun nonetheless. We must follow all guidelines that are in place at the time. Keep your fingers crossed and stand by for more information to follow!
- During every weekend in October, we had rentals for the White House. Some bookings have also been made for December. Business is booming, keeping B.J. and Janet hopping.
- Donations have been made to St. Joseph Church and Shrine and Salem Lutheran Church during the past month. We continue to work on an outstanding request from St. Anthony School. Mal McLetchie has been invaluable in processing the requests.
- The GHS website is under construction and should be ready in the near future. Stand by for the latest developments!

**WELCOME TO OUR
NEW MEMBERS ...**

Don Randon
MaryAnn Randon

Wishing a Blessed and Happy Thanksgiving to you and your family.

Times Past — By Stephanie Dieterich

“The Avenue” -- Part 1 of a Series

In 1836 landowner Nicolas Noel Destrehan worked with surveyor Benjamin Buisson to lay out the Village of Mechanikham. The plan included a scenic “Commons” framed by twin boulevards with space for a church, courthouse and a college to the rear, as well as a railroad right of way, foundry and ferry landing. Mechanikham consisted of one street on either side of the Commons, Copernicus Avenue, renamed Huey P. Long Avenue in the 1930s.

In 1838 Solomon High, president of St. Mary’s Market Steam Ferry Company, expanded the street grid with a seamless three-block annex immediately downriver. The ferry service would receive more riders and also increase the value of the subdivision. This development was named Gretna. In a short time, both developments would collectively be known as Gretna.



Ferry line and bus terminal on Huey P. Long Avenue, mid-1950s.

graduated from Gretna High you had the equivalent of a college education! The generation before was lucky to have finished grammar school. Although a church was never built on the Commons, an impressive post office was. The 1936 postal structure on 4th Street now serves as the Gretna Cultural Center for the Arts.

Early on the area was heavily industrial. The American Distilling Co. occupied three blocks along Derbigny where the present Jefferson Parish Courthouse is today, as well as the entire first block of Copernicus to Derbigny, plus three entire blocks from the river to 3rd Street, bounded by Amelia and Fried.

Chickasaw Wood Products, which made barrels, kegs and shooks, occupied the entire second block between Fried and Gov. Hall.

Shooks were one of the largest components in manufacturing of lumber. In 1930 nearly one half of all lumber manufacturing went into making box shooks. Shooks were lumber slats that were shipped and assembled at packing houses for shipping merchandise, prior to modern cardboard boxes.

The only way across the river was by ferry until the Huey P. Long Bridge was built in 1935. The bridge was too far out of the way and many residents didn’t own automobiles. Westbankers rode the ferry over to New Orleans for jobs, shopping, schools, doctors and even hospitals since West Jefferson Hospital would not open until 1960.

Taking advantage of the ferry location on Copernicus, many shops, groceries and businesses did very well. While waiting for the ferry you could grab a few needed items or even a beer.

“The Avenue” continues next month, with some of the long gone and maybe forgotten establishments.



Trolley on Copernicus Avenue, circa 1912.

Over time the ferry house moved from Lavoisier Street to the foot of Copernicus. In 1907 the Neoclassical Beaux-Arts Jefferson Parish Courthouse, now Gretna City Hall, was built on the Commons at 2nd Street. A trolley would provide transportation from Algiers to the foot of the Commons. This location later became a bus terminal. Texas Pacific Depot was built around the turn of the century on 3rd Street behind the courthouse, serving both passengers and freight. Many travelers as well as Veterans of WWI and WWII departed here, some soldiers never to return. Southern Pacific Depot, a freight-only line, occupied the north side of 4th Street.

Gretna Primary School on 5th Street, now the German-American Cultural Center, was completed on the Commons in 1911. The proposed “college to the rear” was never built, but Gretna High School was erected on 10th Street in 1927. It was said that if you



White House Hosts Reunions, Receptions and Social Events

The White House, beautifully renovated, is available to be rented for social events such as receptions, repasts, showers and parties.

Amenities include an added patio, updated kitchen and large back yard for socializing. For availability and rates, call 504.362.3854.



Kitchen Korner



“Recipes from our kitchen to yours” as promised on the cover of the best-selling “Gretna Historical Society Cookbook.” The current cookbook was created in 2017 with some recipes included from an earlier GHS cookbook. Cookbooks available at the complex office for a \$25 donation.



HOT TAMALES PIE

Rosie Gremillion

Original GHS Cookbook Recipe

- 1 large chopped onion
- ½ lb. ground pork
- 1 lb. ground round steak
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. pepper
- ¾ cup chopped ripe olives
- ½ cup diced celery
- 1 -12 oz. can whole kernel corn
- 1-10 ½ oz. can tomato soup
- ½ tsp. paprika
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- ¼ cup chopped raisins (optional)

Sauté onion in oil, add meat and cook till redness is gone, add remaining ingredients. Pour in greased casserole. Spread corn meal mush on top of this (Mix ¾ cup corn meal in 3 cups water, 1 tsp. cumin, ¼ tsp. salt, 1 tsp. chili powder. Cook till mush is thick.) Sprinkle paprika over this. Bake at 350 degrees, 1 hour covered and then ½ hour uncovered.

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

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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 \$20 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. Guests and prospective members are always welcome to attend the meetings.

The society's newsletter, *Gretna Chronicles*, is published monthly and mailed or emailed to all members.

Gretna Chronicles

is published for the members and friends of the

Gretna Historical Society

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