



Gretna Chronicles



Gretna, Louisiana

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December 2020

The President Presiding...

By Sylvia Schwarz, GHS President

Hope everyone enjoyed Thanksgiving even though for most it was different and perhaps difficult without friends and family in abundance. It may have seemed lonely, but we must remember the significance of the holiday and that is to give thanks for all we have and how blessed we truly are.

- The Board has voted that a Christmas celebration would not be in the best interest of our membership. We do have the space and means to celebrate with our members, but the Board did not want to take a chance of anyone becoming sick over the holidays. As a result, we look forward to 2021 and pray we will meet again soon.
- GHS is now in possession of the signed usufruct agreement with the City of Gretna to utilize the land on which the Caboose and Depot sit. We can now proceed to draw up an agreement with GEDA utilizing the Depot as their offices. Yeah! I know they are as anxious as we are to complete this process.
- Word of mouth is beginning to spread concerning what a great venue the White House is to rent for meetings, weddings, showers, repasts and other celebrations. We have several bookings for December. Please help spread the word.
- The construction of the GHS website is proceeding and close to completion. The Board previewed the format and all we could say was WOW! When it is launched, we will be the envy of every organization in Gretna and all other organizations. Once the launch date is set, you will be informed, and you will say WOW in agreement.
- To further enhance our yard, a mural for the storage shed located next to the Blacksmith Shop is in the works. Artists are submitting proposals and ideas for this project. The hope is that along with Garland's upgrade of our gardens, this will lead to further utilization of our facility, i.e. garden parties, Easter egg hunts and other outdoor events.
- The complex had minimal damage because of Hurricane Zeta. The damage was quickly repaired and all is well. Thanks to B.J.'s diligence, it was discovered that our facilities are grossly underinsured. Along with Daul Insurance, this will be rectified.
- The condition of the wall surrounding the Hook and Ladder Cemetery is a concern. Discussions between GHS and the City of Gretna about what can be done are being considered.



Wishing all of you a Merry Christmas! Let's all pray for a better 2021.

Times Past — By Stephanie Dieterich

“The Avenue” -- Part 2 of a Series

By the mid 1930s things started changing in Gretna. A news article read, “The business heart of Jefferson Parish, Gretna has expanded so rapidly that many friends of the town who have been away would not recognize the old streets when they came back.”

Gretna opened its first “supermarkets.” Jefferson Parish’s largest food store, The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Co. (the A&P) opened in the first block of Huey P. Long Avenue and the H.G. Hills Store, another grocery chain open directly across the street. Small compared to today’s groceries, these supermarkets were huge compared to the corner groceries that locals were accustomed to.

Weiner’s Furniture Store was between the A&P and the 600-seat Tower Movie Theater. Cowboy hero Lash La Rue’s movies thrilled the kids especially when he made personal appearances, riding his horse down the aisles. The Tower was newer than Berenson’s Hollywood Theatre on Newton and 3rd Streets.

Other businesses on the even-numbered side of the 100 block opened and closed over time, including Fitzgerald’s and Gretna Jewelry Stores, Klein’s Drugstore, Melanie’s Dress Shop, Meyers Men’s Shop, Goodwill, Avenue Shoe Store, and lastly, on the corner was Gretna Garage and Supply, a distributor of Dodge and Plymouth autos. This location later became Avenue Restaurant & Bar.

On the odd-numbered side of the avenue was Browns Restaurant & Bar, later Happy’s Bar. The Hill Store location later became the American Discount Store, A.D.S. The RiverShack parking lot sits on the footprint of both buildings.

The impressive Jefferson Building was originally Jefferson Bank and later became The Bank Club, a gambling establishment. Both Gretna Hardware and Duvic’s Hardware occupied the building that later became A.J. Cambre Stationery Store. Neither building is open for business now, but their names are still displayed on the façades.

Martin Butirich Restaurant and Black Marble Cafe became Tom’s Tavern and Mothers Restaurant. After a complete renovation, it is now Thanh Thanh Restaurant.

The building now housing Huey P’s Pizzeria is probably the oldest building on the block. The turn of the century building was previously Cut Rate Drug Store, the Gretna Pharmacy of Richard and Vicknair, and the law offices of

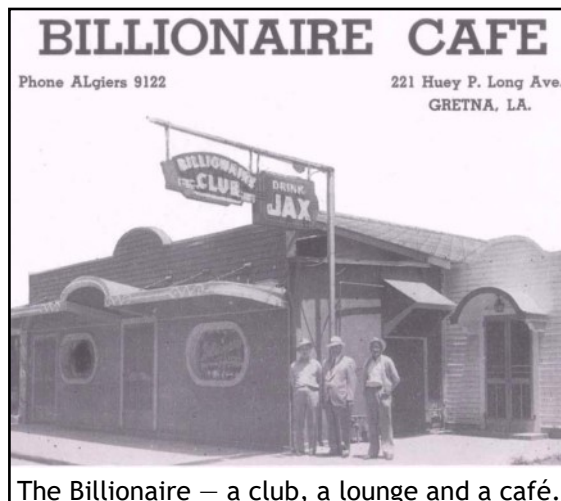


Best Ice Cream once occupied the corner where Roulé Ice Cream is today.

Marion Edwards and Harry Lee, before his sheriff days. In fact, his desk stood right where the pizza oven is today. The building was once the home of Fame Shoe Store and the psychedelic music club called The Pink Daisy. GHS board member Ray Markase, a member of The Swingin’ Vines, said the group was considered the house band.

Across 2nd Second Street was First National Bank, today

Gulf Coast Bank, the only original building left in the 200 block. There was also Meyers Specialty Clothing, Wilson’s Variety Store and the Billionaire Café, also called Billionaire Inn, Billionaire Club and Billionaire Lounge depending on the owner or the year. Though pressured to sell her prime location at 227 Huey P. Long, Mary Meisner Fried refused to let go of her family home. Last on this block was Gretna Furniture Store. Many other establishments were within walking distance on both



The Billionaire – a club, a lounge and a café.

sides of the Avenue. The Auto Lec became Western Auto, now the Salvador A. Liberto Building. Wisser’s Café & Bar, the Joy Lounge, Mary Carter Paint Store and today’s Gretna Tavern all occupied the same building.

There was the 8-lane Gretnaite Bowling Alley whose pins were manually set. The newly opened El Gato Negro Restaurant was also a favorite spot as Archie Stumpf’s Drugstore with its soda fountain. Babin’s Jewelry is now Amore’ Bakery & Café. Leson Chevrolet, owned by the first Gretna Town Marshall Peter Leson became Adams Record Shop and Jefferson Music, today Common Grounds Restaurant. The Best Ice Cream location is now Roulé Ice Cream.



White House Is Available For Reunions, Receptions

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



Enjoy this holiday recipe taken from our “Gretna Historical Society Cookbook,” created in 2017. A great Christmas gift, Cookbooks are available at the complex office for a \$25 donation.

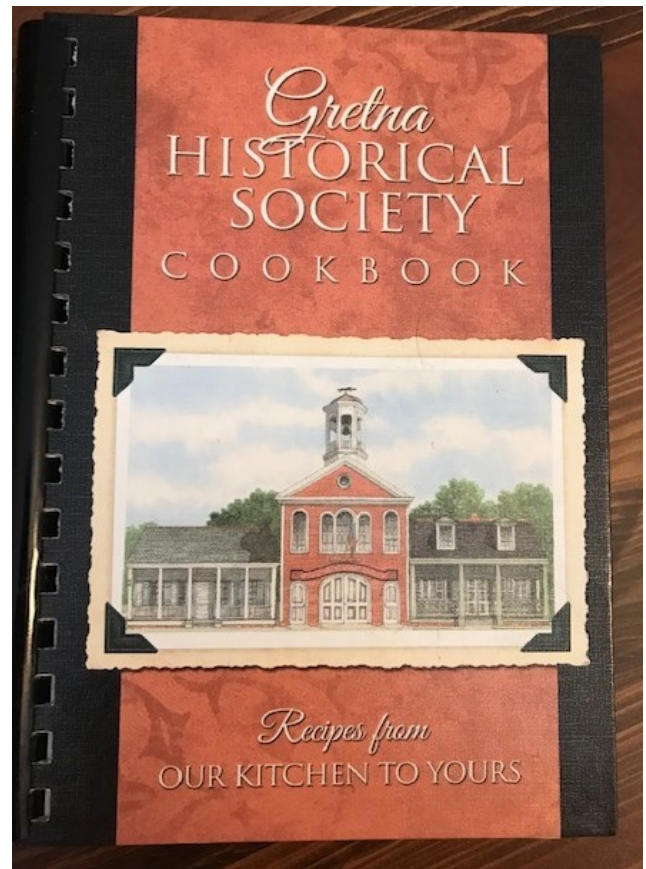
HOT CRABMEAT DIP

From the Kitchen of Bobby & Ellen Goens

- 2 8 oz. Packages Philadelphia Cream Cheese
- 2 Lbs. Crabmeat
- 2 Chopped Onions
- 2 Sticks of Butter
- 1 Tsp. Worcestershire Sauce
- 1 Tsp. Tabasco Sauce
- ¼ Tsp. Garlic Sauce

Directions:

Saute onions in butter for about 10 minutes. Add cream cheese. Mix well. Add crabmeat and all other ingredients, mix well and cook until hot. Serve with your favorite crackers and ENJOY!!



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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