



# Gretna Chronicles

Gretna, Louisiana

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An Official Publication of the Gretna Historical Society

August 2020

## The President Presiding...

By Sylvia Schwarz, GHS President

Another month has gone by, and I hope everyone is still doing well and staying healthy. The GHS Board is meeting monthly and taking care of business.

- I hope you have had an opportunity to pass by and see how beautiful the Depot and Caboose look. Work is still being done on the inside. A train exhibit is planned for display. The Gretna Farmer's Market will be moving in soon. No date has been set.
- Good news! The Board voted to roll over all membership dues that were paid for 2020 to cover the dues for 2021. Anyone who has not paid their 2020 dues will have to pay dues next year.
- All Monthly Membership Meetings and programs have been put on hold until further notice. As soon as we can have a meeting ensuring everyone's safety and compliance to the City of Gretna and the State of Louisiana guidelines, we will begin to schedule gatherings. We are investigating producing virtual programs for the membership to enjoy in lieu of our monthly membership meetings.
  - The Museum complex opened to the public on July 1. Masks are required and we have sanitation stations available. Hopefully, you as members have had an opportunity to see the renovations and the improvements in the landscaping out back.
  - We have had two rental functions already, and more are planned in the future. Guidelines as to the number of participants able to be present at a function are strictly being followed.
  - Our alarm system has been upgraded.
- We are in discussions about extending the lease for the Kitty Strehle House. In addition, a new air conditioning system will be installed in the Kitty Strehle House as soon as it can be scheduled. Air conditioning companies are inundated with repairs due to the excessive heat we are experiencing.
- For your information, the 2020 Gretna Prayer Dinner has been cancelled.



Sylvia Schwarz



The renovated Depot.

*Stay tuned for the latest news from the GHS!*

# Times Past — By Stephanie Dieterich

## “Front Street” -- Part I of a Series

Gretna long timers say “Front Street” when they refer to First Street, which runs alongside the levee. The empty lots on Front Street, between Lavoisier and Newton Streets, were once a part of Gretna’s early commercial district.

Westbankers shopped there from the mid-1880s through the 1950s for most of their needs. Some of the City’s oldest and most impressive buildings stood in that block, but are now gone. Gretna had not yet become a National Historic District and there was no protection of historic structures. Protests in 1997 against the demolition of those fine buildings were not successful, and now they are gone forever, nothing left but empty lots. One of the buildings, a circa 1840, 2-1/2 story brick Greek Revival structure, was best known as the home of “Stumpf’s Magic Hoodoo.”

The founder of “Magic Hoodoo,” John Stumpf was born at sea in 1857 as his German parents made the crossing to America. He was named after his brother John who was on the same ship, but tragically fell overboard and drowned. His family settled in New Orleans where he was raised. His father was an old-time merchant on Dryades Street and a large owner of New Orleans real estate.

John Stumpf attended Nashville Military Academy before entering Tulane University and graduating from the Department of Pharmacy in 1876. He moved to Gretna where he established his drug store and set up his “Magic Hoodoo” plant; he resided on the same block. Although he discovered his famous ant remedy around 1881, it was not marketed until around 1899. When he died in 1911 the business continued as John Stumpf’s Son, Alvin T. Stumpf, also a pharmacist, served as president of the company and continued to promote the products. His other sons were Dr. Louis Stumpf, a dentist, and Archibald C. Stumpf, also a pharmacist.

In 1915, “Magic Hoodoo” won a World Medal at the Panama-Pacific Industrial Exposition in San Francisco for the important role it played in giving relief from insects during the building of the Panama Canal.

Alvin Stumpf added new insecticides and sanitary supplies to the original stock of ant poisons. Other products manufactured on site were roach powder and paste, deodorizing blocks, Rust-A-Way, Moth Eater, and Death-Ray mosquito spray, which came in a refillable



Gretna’s Front Street, 1900.  
(Photo courtesy of Sevilla White Finley)

pump spray can. The Stumpf products were a staple in every home, sold everywhere and shipped to faraway places such as Egypt, China and Turkey.

In 1923, Alvin Stumpf opened Gretna’s first hotel, the Alpha Inn at 610 Front Street. A contest that was judged by a committee of citizens awarded a \$10 gold piece to the person who best named the hotel.

Alvin Stumpf entered public life in 1928, serving on the Jefferson Parish Police Jury, the Louisiana House of Representatives and as a State Senator before retiring from politics in 1959. He then devoted his time to the new Stumpf’s Westside Shopping Center, said to be the first of

its kind in Louisiana.

**More on Front Street next month as the series continues!**

PEN PICTURES . . . . . MEN OF LOUISIANA

ALVIN T. STUMPF, Vice-President Gretna Exchange Bank, President Magic-Hoodoo Ant Remedies

Left: Alvin Stumpf’s “Magic Hoodoo” ad in *The Times Picayune*, Sept. 19, 1917.



# The Renovated White House is Ready for Rentals

The beautifully renovated White House is available for rental for receptions, repasts, showers, parties and other social events. Amenities include an added patio, updated kitchen and big backyard for socializing. Call 504.362.3854 for rates and availability.



## Kitchen Korner: Get Cooking!

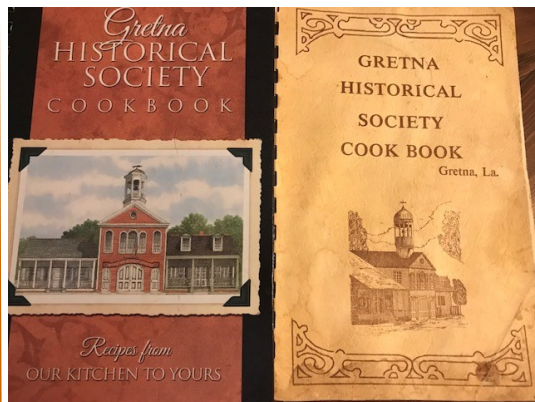


Welcome to the new “Kitchen Korner,” which will be included in upcoming GHS Chronicles. “Recipes from our kitchen to yours” as promised on the cover of the best-selling “Gretna Historical Society Cookbook” will be offered.

The current cookbook was created in 2017 by Sarah Daigle, Judy LeBlanc and other Board members with Dawn Rome doing most of the typing. Some recipes from an earlier GHS cookbook were used and noted in this cookbook. For a \$20 donation, a cookbook can be acquired from the complex office.

The first GHS Cookbook was published in 1983 by a group of members including the late “Golden Girls,” Elizabeth Schwarz, Carol Lee Maness, Ann Gauthreaux and Patsy Butts. Gordon Carbo did the artwork.

The first recipe offered for your enjoyment is member Paul Daigle’s Potato Salad Recipe because it is usually a very big hit at the annual barbeque.



### Potato Salad for a Crowd

*Paul Daigle*

- |                              |                                 |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>5 pounds potatoes</b>     | <b>2 stalks celery, minced</b>  |
| <b>¼ tsp dried basil</b>     | <b>¼ tsp onion powder</b>       |
| <b>10 eggs, hard boiled</b>  | <b>Mayonnaise to taste</b>      |
| <b>¼ tsp thyme</b>           | <b>¼ tsp garlic powder</b>      |
| <b>½ onion, minced</b>       | <b>Salt and pepper to taste</b> |
| <b>½ tsp Tony Chachere's</b> |                                 |

#### Seasoning

Boil potatoes until tender and dice. Dice hard boiled eggs. Combine all with seasonings and mayonnaise. Feeds a bunch!

*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**

201-209 Lafayette Street

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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 Staff**

James Rolf, Editor

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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 articles of incorporation for the GHS 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 to all members.

## **Gretna Chronicles**

is published for the members and friends of the

### **Gretna Historical Society**

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