



Gretna Chronicles



Gretna, Louisiana

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July 2020

Updates from the President

Dear Members,

We hope this email finds you all well, healthy and ready for things to return to normal ASAP. Even though we have been confined, your GHS Board has been busy. Here is a list of what we've been working on:

- Work is currently being done to make repairs and freshen up the Depot and Caboose. The Gretna Farmer's Market will be occupying some of the space as their office.
- Special thanks to Judy and BJ for cleaning, organizing and completing necessary but postponed work at the museum complex.
- The addition to the White House has been completed and looks fantastic. We already have future bookings!
- The Finance committee has been making plans for the future. Naturally, the Bingo revenue has disappeared so adjustments to the budget have to be made.
- Plans for a General Membership Meeting are fluid. At this point, no date has been set.
- The White House is now officially reopened! (more below)

GHS Museum Complex Reopens



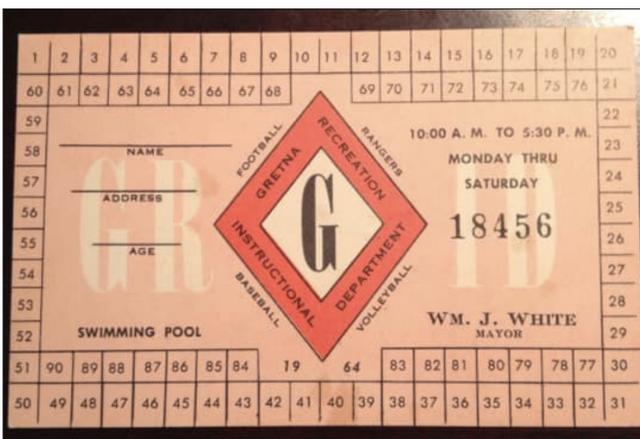
The GHS Museum Complex has reopened for small tours and events. We ask that tour-goers follow CDC and State regulations regarding face coverings and social distancing. Come see the beautiful newly renovated space!

New Member Corner

GHS welcomes its new members who have joined since March 2020.

Thanks to Rachel Hurd, Kevin and Bridget Avery, and Dottie Wilcox for becoming supporting members of this growing organization.

Times Past - by Stephanie Dieterich



GRID Card

One of the joys of growing up in 1960's Gretna was the anticipation of receiving the coveted GRID card. It arrived in the mail after school let out for summer. The bearer was entitled to one free swim session per punch with one card good for 90 punches. There were three swim sessions per day, Monday thru Saturday. Night sessions and Sunday were not included with the card.

A cinder block building sat on a shell lot in front of the pool and the shells were not meant for tender feet. Your card would be punched here before entering with boys going to the left and girls to the right. Once inside, the basket attendant gave you a numbered wire basket and a

matching numbered pin. After changing into your bathing suit, you placed your belongings in the basket that the attendant stored in the basket room. Swimmers kept the numbered pin to later retrieve their possessions.

A mandatory walk or run through the cold shower tunnel reeking of chlorine came next and finally, you would approach the pool. It was huge with a capacity of 900 swimmers. It was divided down the middle with a rope separating the shallow from the deep end. There were four diving boards, two of which were called Hell Divers because they were so high, only for the brave!

When the session ended you were rather hungry from all that swimming. The Dairy Dip just across the railroad track solved the problem. If you hurried you might avoid the line to place your order. To all the swimmers, it was the best ice cream or hot dog in the world!

By the end of the summer that pristine GRID card that had come in the mail had become an old punched, wrinkled, mushy piece of paper. But, oh what fun it gave. Growing up in Gretna in the 60's was a wonderful experience!

Director of Facilities Announces New Facilities Assistant

Paulette Murphy, our Facilities Assistant for some time now, has decided to retire. Paulette has been a true asset for the GHS, especially during my hospitalization when she filled in every day at the complex. She also has participated in the GHS Christmas party with various song and dance acts, as well as portraying ancestors in the Hook and Ladder Cemetery Tour. She will be sorely missed and I wish her the best in her retirement. Thanks, Paulette for all you have done for me and GHS.



Paulette Murphy

That being said, I would like to introduce Janet Parker as my new Facilities Assistant. Janet is a long time GHS member and will assume her new position on Friday, June 19th. Previously, Janet has acted as a tour guide for group tours, assisted with the Valentine Day Weddings, tour guide for the Cemetery Tours and has also participated in the Christmas parties. She's excited about her new role and I look forward to working with Janet in the future.



Janet Parker

by B J LeBlanc

GHS Loses Members During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Jefferson Parish lost the primary keeper and recorder of its history with the passing of Dr. Mary Grace Curry on April 6, 2020, at the age of 72. She was the only child of the late Clyde L. Curry and Gladys Ehret Curry and the great-granddaughter of John Ehret, the first mayor of the city of Gretna. She is survived by her lifelong friend John Potero and a host of cousins and friends.

Mary was Valedictorian for Holy Name of Mary High School, Class of 1965. She earned undergraduate and master's degrees in biology from UNO in 1969 and 1971, respectively, and her doctorate in botany in 1973 from LSU. Her curriculum vitae contained a list of biological and environmental articles that included her master's thesis and Ph.D. dissertation. She wrote more than fifty articles in scientific and professional journals and was an assistant professor of biology at Loyola University.

She served Jefferson Parish Government for over 30 years, as Environmental Impact Officer and Director of the Department of Solid Waste and Environmental Impact. She spent the last few years of her parish career in the Historical Commission's Archives room at the East Bank Regional Library where she participated in her heartfelt interest, the history of the parish and the City of Gretna. She categorized items of historical significance for placement in the forthcoming official Jefferson Parish Archives Building.

Her maternal ancestors settled in Gretna during antebellum days, her love for history began with stories about the history of Gretna that her mother told her as a child. Her parents were charter members of GHS, she followed them serving as archivist, president, longtime Board Historian, sesquicentennial committee chairperson, and brilliantly as Chairperson of the Historic District Committee.

During 1982, she prepared nominations for citations in the National Register of Historic Places of such Gretna landmarks as the David Crockett Firehall and Steam Pumper, Gretna City Hall and St. Joseph Catholic Church and Most Holy Sacrament Convent Complex. She worked tirelessly for two years to have The City of Gretna nominated as a National Register Historic District.

She was appointed to Gretna's Zoning Advisory Board, the Committee for Tourism and received the United Daughters of the Confederacy's Jefferson Davis Medal in 1986.

Dr. Curry was a past president of the Jefferson Historical Society of Louisiana, on the Board of Directors for many years. She was Chairlady of the Jefferson Parish Historical Commission. She was a founding member of the Friends of the German-American Cultural Center and president of the German Heritage, Cultural and Genealogical Society.

Mary was the author of "Gretna-A Sesquicentennial Salute", a definitive history of the City of Gretna in 1986. She wrote Jefferson History Notebooks and other publications of the Commission.

Dr. Curry took particular pride in her membership in many lineage organizations including The Daughters of the American Revolution, The Daughters of the War of 1812 and the Colonial Dames of the 17th Century. She was also founding and current President of the David Crockett Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, at one time, the largest chapter of the UDC in the State of Louisiana. She was a devoted parishioner of St. Angela Merici Church in Metairie where she attended Mass every day following her retirement. Private graveside services were held in Westlawn Cemetery.

A testimony to a life well lived with a definite purpose can be found in the dedication of her book back in 1986: "I dedicate this book to my mother, Gladys Ehret Curry who from my earliest recollections made the history of Gretna omnipresent in my life and to my great grandfather, John Ehret without whom no history of Gretna or Jefferson Parish would be complete."

Charmaine Rini

Gretna Historical Society is saddened by the loss of several members since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. We lost our youngest member, Leo Beane, and our oldest member, Theresa Miller. GHS also grieves the passing of Catherine Gegenheimer, Jerry Puderer, Amery Englade, Bill Scheffler, Eddie Falterman and Bobby Touche.

Gretna Chronicles succeeds the GHS Newsletter and the Gretna Historical Society Newsletter as the official news source 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 Staff

James Rolf, Editor

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Gretna Chronicles

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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.

- Sylvia Schwarz.....President
- James Rolf.....Vice-President
- Allison Livingston.....Recording Secretary
- Helen Williams.....Corresponding Secretary
- Sarah Daigle.....Treasurer
- Stephanie Dieterich.....Historian
- Monica Naquin.....Archivist
- Sue McLetchie.....Parliamentarian
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- Holly Williams.....Sergeant-at-Arms
- Ray Markase.....Program Chairman
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- Chris Ziifle.....2nd Board Member-at-Large
- Terry Lacoste.....3rd Board Member-at-Large
- Celeste Apostalo.....Publicity Chairman
- B.J. LeBlanc.....Building Chairman