



Gretna Chronicles



Gretna, Louisiana

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The President Presiding...

By Sylvia Schwarz, GHS President

Hello everyone! We miss seeing you and hope by the time we get back to having meetings we will remember what we all look like. Things are moving along nicely as far as GHS goes.



- Garland Gaspard has retired and he has been hired by GHS to take care of the grounds at the complex. Anyone who knows Garland knows he will do a great job. This by no means excuses him from his primary job with GHS which is “Chief Cook.” Nothing can interfere with that job!
- Believe it or not, our new website is officially under construction. We have contracted Charles Hancock with CED Graphics, aka “Crazy Eyed Deers,” to develop our website and set up our social media sites.
- We have donated to historic Hosanna Fellowship Church of Gretna located in McDonoghville to assist in the renovation of the church. We have also received three other requests that the Finance Committee has under consideration. We are so pleased we can assist these historic sites while fulfilling our primary mission.
- The City of Gretna has drawn up a usufruct agreement with GHS for the land that the Depot and Caboose occupy. It will go before the Oct. 14 City Council meeting for approval. If approved, we will finalize it the next day.

This will lead the way for the lease agreement with GEDA/The Gretna Farmer’s Market and Art Walk for use of the Depot as their office. We are grateful for the expertise provided by Jon Majewski, a member, in both these matters.

- WOW! There are bookings for rental of the White house every weekend in October. The new plantation shutters are installed in The White House, and they look fabulous. Stop and take a peak.
- All of the GHS Board Members have agreed to continue in their respective current position until such time that elections can be held.

**WELCOME TO OUR
NEW MEMBER ...**
Suzanne Taylor

We extend our well wishes to all of you and pray we will see each other soon, for this too shall pass. Until then.....Remember to vote in the upcoming election.

Times Past — By Stephanie Dieterich

“Front Street” -- Part 3 of a Series

The last of the demolished buildings occupying the 600 block of Front Street sat on the corner of Newton Street. This building originally housed Viering Hardware and Crockery Store, established by Henry Gottlier Viering in 1858. He was a recent 28-year-old German immigrant at the time. In the Civil War he served with distinction with the Company of Captain Guy Drew, Louisiana Calvary, where the soldiers furnished their own horses.

After the war, he married Louise Elizabeth Munch who helped run the store. The 1870 census has Henry Viering listed as a saddler and his wife as a furniture dealer, living with their two daughters at 122 Second Street, a house no longer there. Needing help at the store in 1873, he sent for his 16-year-old German nephew, Charles Henry Viering. Charles Henry's son, Henry Paul Sr. became the third mayor of Gretna, serving from 1923 to 1925.

The Viering building was being used by the Police Jury in 1937 when it was purchased by Nat B. Knight. It was later said to be the site of Goldstein's Store. Knight was a popular banker, lawyer, artist and public official. The founder of Guaranty Bank & Trust and Jefferson Savings and Loan, he served on the Public Service Commission for 36 years and was president of the Jefferson Parish Bar Association. He was active in the entire community and was a member of the Gretna Historical Society.

As businesses moved to other areas, Front Street became seriously depressed. Knight envisioned a



renaissance of the Gretna riverfront. Realizing the beauty of living with a river view, he was possibly the first to address it by building himself a fabulous penthouse on top of the Viering building. Sadly, after his death all the buildings that once stood on the 600 block of Front Street were demolished.

On the next block between Newton and Huey P. Long Avenue, most of the original buildings still exist. The first building in the 700 block, at the



Nat B. Knight's penthouse on Front Street at Newton.

corner of Newton, was Joe Menzer's Department Store, filling the entire family's clothing needs, at a lower cost than Samuel Brothers. In 1961, men's Wrangler jeans sold for \$3.98. A 1960 classified ad



read "looking for a bookkeeper-stenographer, 5 days a week, paying \$285 a month." This building later became a Goodwill Store.

Culmone's Modern Shoe Repair occupied 710 Front Street. Frank Culmone's 1939 advertisement read:

"It's the soles of the people I keep in view.
I am the doctor of the boot and the shoe.
I serve the living and not the dead,
With the best of leather, wax and thread."

The Hollywood Shoppe at 712 Front Street had to change its name due to a conflict with a store by the same name on Canal Street. The store was renamed the Fashion Shop. Next door was the Clover Club, a gambling establishment. This building is now occupied by the River Shack Gretna. The River Shack parking lot was originally the site of Willie's Bar and also Brown's Restaurant & Bar.

Nowadays the River Shack has an upstairs river view, as do the Riverfront Condos and a few other rooftop penthouses. Although the 600 block of Front Street remains empty, Mr. Knight's renaissance appears to be coming true. Gretna gets better and better!



Renovated White House Available for Variety of Special 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. Call 504.362.3854 for availability and rates.



Kitchen Korner



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

DIRTY RICE — Irma Donnes *Original GHS Cookbook Recipe*



- 1 lb. lean ground meat
- 1 cup uncooked rice
- 1 can onion soup (made with beef stock)
- 1 can mushroom soup (condensed)
- 1 tsp. Kitchen Bouquet (optional)
- 1 cup celery, chopped fine
- 1 small onion, chopped fine
- 1 small green pepper, chopped fine
- ¼ cup chopped green onions
- Salt and pepper to taste

Mix all ingredients together. Preheat oven, 350 degrees. Cook in 2 quart covered baking dish for 1 hour and 15 minutes.



Since GHS is all about history, the Board felt that our current members may enjoy seeing some of what was happening in GHS back in the day.

A reprint from the GHS Newsletter of August 1989
SPECIAL THANKS to all who made the Grand Opening of the Louisiana State Fire Museum a wonderful success; the American Legion Post 54 Band, the Algiers Brass Band, the Crockett's Ladies Auxiliary, the Crockett Firemen, the Gretna Historical Society's ladies, the City of Gretna and all of the elected officials and firefighting officials who came from throughout the state. Finally a special thanks to Lloyd Gomez, Ed Ott (our generous and talented decorator who masterminded the many wonderful displays), Earl Cancienne, Jerome Wilson, Terry Thibodaux Mike Labruzzo, Mary Curry, Anne Gauthreaux, Everette Gauthreaux, John Heindel, Virgie Ott, Judy Lotz, Valerie Thibodaux, Bernard Covell and all the other wonderful people who cleaned, polished, typed, screwed, glued, begged, borrowed, loaned, baked, served, guarded and made the day a wonderful success.

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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