



# Gretna Chronicles



Gretna, Louisiana

Volume 34, Issue 4

An Official Publication of the Gretna Historical Society

April, 2024

## Historic Creole Cottage With GHS Roots

By M. Helen Williams



Steeped in Old Gretna history, the recently restored Lafayette Street home of Stan and Judy Salathe will be on the GHS Spring Tour of Homes 2024 on April 7.



During the 1891 Crevasse, water inundated all of the Westbank. Today the home of Stan and Judy Salathe, the Creole Cottage will be on the Spring Tour of Homes on April 7.

One house on this year's Spring Tour of Homes on April 7 is the lovingly restored 1860s Creole Cottage with 6/6 windows, bungalow dormer and columns at 635 Lafayette Street. Owned by Stan and Judy Salathe, it is one of the oldest houses still standing in Gretna and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The home is widely recognized since it and the Anslem family who lived there at the time were photographed during the 1891 Crevasse as water inundated all of the Westbank. Other owners of the home have been the Thoede and Stumpf families, both deep rooted in Gretna.

Great care was taken to make this 3,100-square-foot historic home comfortable for today's living style. The Salathes expect this to be their forever home so they thought ahead to make the house wheelchair accessible and to later easily turn a few rooms into a caregiver suite. The home has two bedrooms, a study and 3-1/2 baths.

Stan Salathe, who can trace his heritage back to the White Family in Gretna, has a connection to the White House, the entrance to the GHS Museum Complex at 209 Lafayette Street. Stan's dad, Wayne Salathe, was 3rd vice president in the early days of GHS and W. Richard White was the 2<sup>nd</sup> vice president. The two were among the last owners of the White House and both donated their inherited share to the society in 1987.

There is a photograph in Stan's office of his grandfather, Erwin T. Salathe, who got his start with horse drawn wagons as a produce hauler turned beer distributor and who was doing quite well. Concerned with the constant talk of impending prohibition, in 1926 he decided to deliver home heating oil, aka kerosene. His success led to the formation of Salathe Oil Company.

The Gretna Historical Society  
Spring Tour of Homes 2024  
Sunday, April 7th • 1 - 5 pm  
\$25 per person  
Tickets Sold Day of Tour: 209 Lafayette Street  
1 pm - 4 pm



## March Meeting Highlights

At the March meeting, members shared the gym with the St. Joseph Day Altar in progress. It was impressive even without any foodstuff, cakes or flowers. Board members turned the scene into a photo op.

Mayor Belinda C. Constant, guest speaker for the evening said she felt right at home in the gym where she attended elementary school and her mom, Jackie Cambre worked so diligently for years to create an annual St. Joseph Altar. The Mayor spoke about the Program 2030.

Judge Vernon Wilty made a surprise visit to the March meeting to deliver a check for \$1,000 to President Lisa LaFrance, which represents the proceeds from the 2024 Valentine's Day Weddings. Generous Judge Wilty donates the proceeds every year. We are so thankful to have Judge Wilty officiate over this wonderful annual special event for us. The "marrying Judge" shared with our members that he has performed over 27,000 weddings during his career and still counting!



Mayor Belinda C. Constant was guest speaker for the March Meeting.



Judge Vernon Wilty made a surprise visit to the March meeting to deliver a check for the proceeds from the Valentine's Day Weddings.



The GHS Board members took a photo op in front of the very unfinished St. Joseph Day Altar in the gym.

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Patricia Crowley  
Mike Ledet  
John Mercier

## CALENDAR

- Apr 7 - GHS Spring Tour of Homes - (Ticketed Event)
- Apr 11 @ 6 pm Membership Meeting at St. Joseph Gym.
- May 9 @ 6 pm Membership Meeting in GHS Complex back yard (Ticketed Event)
- June 13 @ 6 pm Membership Meeting at St. Joseph Gym.





**Times Past —**  
By Stephanie Dieterich  
**#8 Willow Drive**



#8 Willow Drive, today.

If you mention #8 Willow Drive most people wouldn't recognize the address. But to old time Gretna residents, if you mention Dr. Carroll Gelbke's house, they know the exact location. Even though no member of the Gelbke family has resided at that address since 1978, it will always be fondly known as Dr. Gelbke's house.

The home had its start in 1939 when lots 10, 11 and 12, in square 1, Garden Park subdivision, were purchased by Julia Holmes, wife of Carroll F. Gelbke, a beloved Gretna physician. This all-cypress home was the first built in the subdivision. The Gelbke's were known for many, many, social gatherings and events in and around their home. The lavish grounds were the scene of many garden parties, picnics and croquet games.

Since Dr. Gelbke died the home has changed hands a few times. Twenty years ago it was on our GHS Spring Tour of Homes. It remained basically the same until the new owners, Chuck and Gerry Blumenthal, purchased it recently. The Blumenthals have graciously agreed to open their home for the upcoming 2024 Home Tour on April 7 so people can see the tremendous transformation the home has undergone.

The former 2,567-square-foot home was enlarged to 3,170 square feet with the addition of a side porch and den. After removing walls, the kitchen that was once tiny and cramped is now large and full of light. The entire three bedroom, three bath home has had every inch replaced or restored. Adjacent land was purchased to accommodate the amazing "lazy river" pool.

Once again #8 Willow Drive is a coveted location for exciting entertainment events.



Above, the "before" kitchen at "Dr. Gelbke's House," now known as the "Lazy River" House at #8 Willow Drive. The "after" kitchen is pictured at left.



*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, LA 70054-0115



## 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

is published for the members and friends of GHS

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### Gretna Historical Society

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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 \$25 per person. Monthly meetings are held at the St. Joseph Complex Gym at 7th and Newton Streets on the second Thursday of every month at 6:00 p.m. The society's newsletter, *Gretna Chronicles*, is published monthly and mailed or emailed to all members.

- Lisa LaFrance.....President
- Ray Markase.....Vice President
- Sylvia Schwarz.....Recording Secretary
- Holly Williams.....Corresponding Secretary
- Sarah Daigle.....Treasurer
- Stephanie Dieterich.....Historian and Archivist
- Blaine Daigle.....Sergeant-at-Arms
- Val Coles.....Parliamentarian
- M. Helen Williams.....Board Member/Publicity
- Paul Coles.....Board /Hospitality Director
- Cheryl Amacker .....Board Member/Membership
- Monica Naquin.....Board Member at Large
- Judy LeBlanc.....Director of Facilities