



Gretna Chronicles



Gretna, Louisiana

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Wine, Wine and More Wine!

By M. Helen Williams



Joe Miller, guest speaker at the July Meeting whetted members' appetites for the upcoming GHS August Annual Wine Tasting event when he talked about French wines.

"In speaking of the wines of France, I introduced the Chateau Terrefort as one of the offerings that you will enjoy at the upcoming wine tasting. As a sophomore in high school, circa 1969-70, Chef Warren LeRuth, the owner of LeRuth Restaurant whom I greatly admired introduced me to this great inexpensive French Bordeaux named Chateau Terrefort. Years later when I opened my wine shop, I searched for the Chateau Terrefort, found it and stocked it in my shop so I could relate my Warren LeRuth story to my customers," Miller said.

"Other wines to be featured at the wine tasting include a sparkling wine, a white, a rose', two reds and a 'lagniappe' surprise for a total of six."

The Annual Wine Tasting, on August 8 at 6 p.m. at the St. Joseph Gym, once served as the GHS Membership Drive as locals were

invited to attend as an introduction to preservation and all the society had to offer. The society membership back then was thin. As our membership grew, or rather exploded, the "membership drive" was no longer needed, but was so enjoyed that it simply became a wine tasting.

For those new to GHS, here are some hints of the evening. Just imagine you're going to France, with French music playing as you arrive at the front door entrance table and receive your free "ticket" for a gift basket door prize to be drawn at the end of the event.

You are also given a charcuterie box as you arrive, your meal for the evening. You will enjoy being introduced to and served tastes of six fine vintages as you share your tasting experience with your tasting companions.


So, get ready to enjoy the wine and wear the Frenchiest outfit in your closet since there will be a lovely Parisian setting photo op! Bon Jour!



GHS members celebrate at last year's Wine Tasting.

Gretna Trivia Experts Know Their History

Thanks to Ray Markese, entertainment chairman and his scorers, a game of America/Gretna Trivia was enjoyed by all at the July meeting. The “Gretmites,” Joe & JoAnn Toomy, George & Edna Hepting and new member, Jewel Rousel, won the \$100 1st prize.



NEW MEMBERS:

Jewel Rousel
Nicole Stone

CALENDAR

- August 8** @ 6 pm Annual Wine Tasting at St Joseph Gym this year! (Members must check in at Entrance table to get a free ticket for door prize to be drawn at the Wine Tasting Event!)
- September 12** @ 6 pm Membership Meeting at St Joseph Gym. (Members are asked to bring desserts)
- October 10** @ 6 pm Membership Meeting at GHS Complex Backyard. (Annual Barbeque at GHS Complex)



Times Past —

By Stephanie Dieterich

New Hope's Influence on Emmett Kennedy

Gretna native R. Emmet Kennedy was born in 1877 to Irish immigrants. In the Kennedy household, music was always in the air and musical talent appears to have run in the family. Emmett's nephew and namesake, Emmett Hardy, was a child prodigy and a New Orleans jazz cornet musician. Hardy entered a 1919 music contest where, after a long and intense struggle, he outplayed Louis Armstrong!

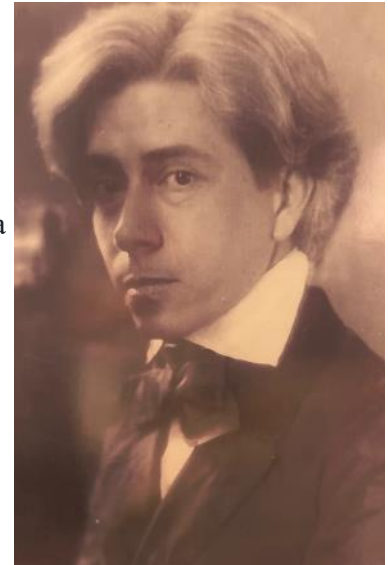
Kennedy's father Dennis, a blacksmith by trade, was also a gifted musician who loved playing Irish jigs on his fiddle. He was sometimes joined by fellow blacksmith William D. White, (the GHS William D. White) who played German tunes.

Emmett Kennedy's life changed at the age of seven on the Sunday morning he first heard African-American spirituals sung at New Hope Baptist Church on 7th Street in Gretna. The church was adjacent to the back yard of the Kennedy home. Emmett would often stand on a high chair at his backdoor watching as his playmates, Sammy and Johnny Sparks, went to church with their mother. So fascinated with the "Negro spirituals" and the dialect of the people living in East Green, a mostly black community in Gretna, Emmett would be seen at every wake, funeral, baptism and wedding at New Hope Baptist Church.

He listened to the spirituals and wrote down the words to preserve for generations, songs that are still sung today. He moved to New York to try his success as a concert pianist. Over time he was also a book reviewer for the *New York Times* and the owner of an antique store on Park Avenue. However, it was his determination to document the simple life, character, folklore and music of the southern "Negro" that lead him to publish books on "Negro" music and folklore. A sought after lecturer on the subject, he gained nationwide fame as author, folklorist, musician and composer.

His publications are: *Black Cameos*, 1924; *Mellows: A Chronicle of Unknown Singers*, 1925; *From The Corner Table*, New York, 1925; *Runes and Cadences, Being Ancestral Memories of Old Historic Days*, 1925; *Gritney People*, 1927; *Red Bean Row*, 1929; *More Mellows*, 1931; and *Songs of An Alien Spirit*, 1940.

R. Emmet Kennedy died in 1941 at 64 while on a visit to New Orleans. He had walked into Max Samson's Drug Store on Camp Street to buy cigarettes, when he had a massive heart attack and died on the spot. He is buried in the Hook and Ladder Cemetery and was featured on a GHS Hook and Ladder Cemetery Tour. There is a permanent 'R. Emmett Kennedy Exhibit' at the Gretna Library.



**Robert Emmett Kennedy
(known as Emmett
Kennedy) 1877-1941**



New Hope Baptist Church of Gretna was founded by James Sparks in the 1880s. The church and the activities of its members were the inspiration for the writings of R. Emmett Kennedy.

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

P.O. Box 115

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

M. Helen Williams, Editor

To submit articles, call Helen at 504.450.8481

(or e-mail mhw500@cox.net)

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.

Gretna Historical Society

<https://www.gretnahistoricalsociety.org/>

P.O. Box 115, Gretna, LA 70054-0115

Phone: 504.362.3854

Email: directoroffacilities@gretnahistoricalsociety.org

Facebook: @GHSGretnaLA

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