



# Gretna Chronicles



Gretna, Louisiana

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## Museum Upgrade 2.0!

By M. Helen Williams

Our GHS President Lisa LaFrance is requesting that GHS members step up to help with the Museum Upgrade in whatever area they choose. Men and women are needed. No one would be expected to do these chores alone. There will be planning and supervision for every job. Meetings at the White House will be necessary sometimes, but a lot can be done remotely from your home once the various projects are in place.

The scope of work is easy and fun and much progress has already been made. The time frame to complete the self-guiding signage is September 1.

In order to support our Mission of education, the GHS Complex tours are the focus of said mission. Elementary age students who have been booked to visit the complex are hyped at first, just to go on a field trip. Once they get into the fire station or blacksmith shop or one of the historic houses, their eyes are open wide with excitement. The plan is to include many more secondary education student tours from our local high schools and invite the area universities' history majors to include GHS Museum into their library of research and support.



Ignacius Strehle House Church Room



Kitty Strehle House Dining Room



Ignacius Strehle House Military Room

The upgrade will include offering self-guided tours with appropriate signage explaining the artifacts and furnishings in the five structures in the Complex. Hostesses in period dress will be present to answer questions or assist guests as needed.

As of now, the needs include the following:

**Museum Complex Upgrade** - Light cleaning, painting, upholstering, furniture refinishing, search for period fixtures, sewing or creating period costumes for guides, computer posting and whatever.

**Education & Museum Tour Program** – Arrange School Tours with all schools in Gretna and then moving on to Jefferson Parish schools. The documentation and recording of all tours are necessary to support successful grant writing which can contribute much needed money into GHS. Most of the volunteers must have light computer skills.

To volunteer, please call the Complex at 504-362-3854 and leave your name and number. You will get called back within a business day. Or, you can leave your information at the next meeting upon entrance and you will be talked to at the meeting.

Lisa LaFrance hopes members will respond to her request for volunteers to help GHS Historian and Archivist Stephanie Dieterich who is spearheading the museum upgrade. The president believes it is very important to offer adult and family tours, as well, and that this upgrade will enhance the community response to the GHS Museum. She said, "Reimagining the Gretna Historical Society Museum Complex is an effort to be more welcoming as we refashion the visitor experience to enhance education, preservation, and sustainability."

Stephanie Dieterich is looking for old photographs that can be scanned and returned. If you have any, please email to [stevie913@gmail.com](mailto:stevie913@gmail.com) or bring to the next meeting!

# Mudbugs Make the Menu at May Meeting

The Annual Crawfish Boil held at the White House was certainly a success with 130 members enjoying! Ray Markase who chaired the event did a great job once again. Also, many thanks to GHS members for the delicious desserts they donated. Treasurer Sarah Daigle again this year donated a beautiful door wreath that was raffled and Holly Williams was the delighted winner!



## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Fred & Susan Stentz  
Jeanne Duhe  
Andrea Casey  
Cheryl McAnespy-Smith  
John & Pamela Jones

## WELCOME BACK:

Stephen & Roylene  
Kornovich  
Eric Livingston



Holly, the  
winner!



## CALENDAR

June 13 @ 6 pm Membership Meeting at St. Joseph Gym.

July 18 @ 6 pm Membership Meeting at St. Joseph Gym. (Notice that this meeting is a week later than usual!)

August 8 @ 6 pm Membership Meeting at St. Joseph Gym. Annual Wine Tasting.

Sadly, we've had complaints about rudeness at meetings. Be kind to anyone with a microphone by being quiet so everyone can hear what's being said!



## Times Past —

By Stephanie Dieterich

### *That Magnificent piece of land known as Brooklyn Pastures!*

There once was a town between Old Gretna and McDonoghville called Brooklyn. Within the town was Brooklyn Pastures, a huge tract of land that comprised 400 acres with 1800 feet of river frontage and a depth of 8000 feet. The entire tract was listed for sale in 1896.

Eventually it was purchased by Weis & Gumbel or The Brooklyn Land Company. The areas closest to the river were leased as farmland, but until the Fifth Street Highway, a dirt road opened in the 1930s, the area below 5<sup>th</sup> Street was cow pasture.

The opening of the new road allowed easy access and possibilities. Gretna businessmen and politicians saw a need and a tremendous opportunity. The location between what is now Richard Street and Stumpf Blvd. was a prime location for a new residential community.

Garden Park subdivision started when bankers Adrian Lapeyronnie and Nat Knight bought the first 15 acres of land below 5<sup>th</sup> Street, from Brooklyn Land Company in 1939. The land was subdivided unto lots and sold, with the first three homes built on Willow Drive. (One of the first homeowners is said to have easily provided dinner by shooting rabbits from an upstairs window).

In 1945 Town Marshal Beaugard Miller purchased two tracts of land of which 25 lots would be carved and sold. Over a short period of time Jefferson Parish Assessor Vernon J. Wilty Sr. who was known as the “moving spirit” of the development, Alderman Charles A. Huber, who was the City’s building inspector and contractor, and James C. Smith, a developer, bought additional parcels and the development quickly moved forward. The land was subdivided according to a survey by City Engineer Alvin E. Hotard.

In 1947 taxpayers voted favorably on a sewerage bond issue in which Garden Park received 1/4 share of the work, and by 1949 sewerage was installed in the new neighborhood where 15 homes had already been built. In 1953 Holly, Beaugard and Gelbke Drives were paved.

Many of the street names in Garden Park reflect the names of those instrumental in developing the subdivision, Gretna’s first! Wilty said, “This subdivision is the answer to something Gretna has needed for a long time -- a real good residential section with building restrictions.” Before long this was “THE” neighborhood to be in. The mayor, police chief, doctors, attorneys, bankers and successful businessmen all called this home.

Once again this neighborhood is on the upswing. The City’s plan for 5<sup>th</sup> Street includes a new green median running down the middle, large sidewalks with parallel parking spots and improved drainage. The local owners are also cleaning up their properties and a new street will cut through 4<sup>th</sup> Street. With the revitalization of 5<sup>th</sup> Street and the short distance from all the activities in Old Gretna, it won’t be long before this “Old Garden Park” neighborhood is coveted once again. History does repeat itself!



The streets of Madison, Jefferson and Monroe on the map are now Fried, Governor Hall and Richard.

**FREE WHARVES AT LAST !**  
 Attention, Capitalists, Manufacturers, Warehousemen,  
**ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1896,**  
 WE WILL SELL BY PUBLIC AUCTION, AT THE AUCTIONEERS' EXCHANGE,  
 629 and 631 Common Street, at 12 M., for Account of  
**The New Orleans Warehouse Company,**  
 IN LIQUIDATION,  
 THAT MAGNIFICENT PIECE OF LAND KNOWN AS THE  
**BROOKLYN PASTURES,**  
 IN JEFFERSON PARISH, DIRECTLY OPPOSITE THE COMMERCIAL CENTER OF NEW  
 ORLEANS, MEASURING NEARLY 1400 FEET FRONT ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, BY  
 MORE THAN 8000 FEET IN DEPTH, CONTAINING NEARLY 400 ACRES OF LAND,  
 INTERSECTED BY THREE RAILROADS AND ONE STREET CAR LINE.

**No Wharfage.**  
**No City Taxes.**

This property will be sold on the exceptionally easy terms of one-third or more cash; balance in one, two and three years, with only six per cent interest; purchaser to assume the taxes of 1895, and deposit 10 per cent upon adjudication.  
 See plan on exhibition at the exchange, or at our office.  
 CURTIS & WALMSLEY,  
 37 CARondelet St.  
 FEB 20 27-1896

*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

## 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](mailto: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/>

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- 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