



THE FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

The Newsletter of the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society

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Fall 2015

REPAIR SURGE NEARING END

During the past 18 months, grant money and matching state funds have accomplished several badly needed restoration projects costing \$184,865. These jobs have been repainting the lime silo, repointing the bricks on most of the pumphouse's south wall, repairing the chimney, and, the most recent job done during the summer, painting the elevated water tank.



Sidewalk Needs Repair

The painting contractor found the water tank to be in fairly good condition except for the final ball-and-pin arrangement at the peak of the roof that helps secure the tank's roof decking and personnel ladder. This was heavily rusted and required welded patches for reinforcement.



North Wall of Boiler Room Needs Repointing

This has all been good news, and more good news is that there is still \$11,810 remaining for more repair work. To continue "working" to spend this money, the Preservation Society has once again hired Thomas & Parker Company to do more repointing, this time on the north wall of the boiler room, which dates back to 1887 and 1900. This is a much smaller area than the earlier repointing job and therefore not as expensive with a tab of \$5,000. Also,

although this masonry is just as old as that on the south wall, it is more sheltered from the weather, so not in quite as poor condition.

Following the repointing, next job to be funded by the remaining balance is repairing the broken-up sidewalk located between the laboratory building and the pumphouse. We're getting quotes on this work now. If there is still leftover money, we'll pick out another project in an effort to spend the last dime!



Cross Bayou Study Area Outlined in Red

City Working on Master Plan

In mid-2014, the City of Shreveport with support from the Environmental Protection Agency commissioned a master planning study for an area called "Cross Bayou Corridor". This area is predominately the south side of Cross Bayou from the Red River to the junction with North Common and bounded on the south side by Caddo Street. A look at a map will show that the Shreveport Water

Works Museum is smack in the middle of the study area.

During the course of the study so far, an engineering consultant has conducted multiple public workshops aimed at creating ideas for the development of the property. The consultant has been charged with incorporating this input into a conceptual master plan that can be used to guide the future uses of the study area.

Details on all of this are far too lengthy to include here in the newsletter, but suffice it to say that the museum will be a key component of what is being envisioned as a “Cross Bayou Corridor that will have become a major mixed-use residential asset and attraction for downtown Shreveport, drawing both its residents and visitors to its small shops, restaurants, entertainment venues, and beautiful, wooded parks and shaded paths along Cross Bayou.”

The bayou frontage on the north side of the museum is presently a tangle of undergrowth and weeds, so if it actually happens, developing the bayou into a pedestrian-friendly public area will be a great thing for increasing the visibility and viability of the museum. Our own internal planning for the museum has always envisioned developing a connection to the bayou with landscaping and a way for pedestrians to access the museum from a dock and from the waterfront, but this project has always been much beyond our financial resources. Some help from the City and other developers may actually bring this wishful thinking to fruition someday.

The consultant’s final report is expected to be released this fall. If you wish to dig into this a bit more, the online link is www.crossbayoucorridor.com.

GOTTA HAVE SOME PIPES!

A preserved Colorado mining town museum from the mid-1800’s (South Park City) has on display a wagon full of what appears at first glance to be wooden pipes. A second glance at the exhibit confirms that this is actually what they are.

The water mains for the town were made of cottonwood logs that were bored through the center, wrapped with metal bands, and tapered at each end so they would fit snugly together. When filled with the constantly running water, the wood swelled and made the joints tight against leaks. The pipes in the wagon were laid to town from the reservoir in 1881 and used for many years before being salvaged for display at the museum in 1960.

Wooden water pipes were once widely used to carry water from one place to another during colonial times until well into the 1900’s. A practical way to manufacture iron pipe came along in the 1800’s and wood began to fall from favor. However, after the Civil War, improved versions of wood pipe like the cottonwood ones shown in the adjacent photograph, or made with staves, like a barrel, competed successfully with metal pipe for quite some time due to being cheaper.

The Water Works Museum has a small piece of wood pipe that you can see on display. Our pipe was dug up in Bastrop Louisiana in 1971 where it was still in use serving a residential area.



South Park City Museum in Fairplay Colorado

Where There’s a Will.....

Since 2013 the Shreveport Water Works Museum has offered the railroad museum’s exhibits for visitors to browse. But, the railroad connection at the SWWM goes back a lot further than that in more ways than one.

The Shreveport water plant was once operated using a train locomotive as its source of steam. The nearby photo, dated November 1911, shows a railroad track to the west end of the building. The track was used to



West End of Original Pumphouse in 1911. Note Rail Boxcar on Siding Track.

deliver supplies by rail, and the photo shows a boxcar being unloaded. Years later, this same siding was used to park a locomotive next to the building with a jerry-rigged steam line from the locomotive's boiler into the building to operate all of the steam powered pumping equipment that supplied the city's water.

This unusual arrangement was the innovation of Thomas Amiss, Water Department Superintendent-Engineer. The three boilers that operated the

plant were purchased in 1917, and in 1938 after over 20 years of hard work, they were due for an overhaul. But, you can't just shut down the water plant to work on it and leave the city without water, so Mr. Amiss borrowed a locomotive from a railroad (the Kansas City Southern?) and used its boiler to pump water with only a brief outage while the temporary piping was connected. Problem solved!

Another example of Mr. Amiss' affinity for railroad equipment is the steam powered air compressor located in the old high service pump room. An examination of the nameplate will show that it is a Westinghouse compressor repurposed from the air brake system of a steam locomotive. Mr. Amiss acquired the tongue-in-cheek nickname of "Old Patch" amongst his employees with his frugal ways.

Amiss was Superintendent-Engineer for the Water Department for over 40 years beginning in 1918, earning a reputation for ability, innovation, and devotion to duty which ultimately resulted in the Cross Lake Water Purification Plant and Pumping Station being named in his honor in 1963. Episodes such as these illustrate why he was so honored.

Museum Operations

After the legislative session restored museum funding to the 2015-2016 fiscal year, operations at the museum have returned to almost what was normal prior to May. We have two part-time employees, Gerald Forrest and Kevin Haines, who share the duties of opening the museum and welcoming visitors, but another employee, David Slack, who took care of maintenance at several museums, was forced to retire.

By juggling the employee work hours being paid by the State, the museum is staying open Wednesday through Saturday from 10a until 4p, but is closed Sunday through Tuesday. The Preservation Society is talking with officials in the Secretary of State's department to determine if it is possible to extend the operating hours by one or more additional days by having our local group reimburse the State for the extra payroll expense. This option may or may not be something that the Preservation Society can afford.

In another bit of good news, it appears that the Legislature provided enough money for the State to return the contributions made earlier this year by local supporters to keep their museums open. If this happens for the Shreveport Water Works Museum, this will return \$3,449 we paid for operating expenses plus another \$1,600 that was spent mowing the grass while the State was "broke" during May and June.

This is an election year, and there will be a new governor and a new legislature taking office in January. There is already talk about the likelihood of a special session to work on repairing a budget that was covered with patches in this year's legislative session. Hopefully there won't be any fresh damage to museums.

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You Can Help.....Make A Donation!

The Preservation Society needs money for restoration and operation of the museum. Your donation can be put to good use!

Name _____

email _____
(If you provide your email address, we can send you occasional updates on activities)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail to MSPSPS, P.O. Box 957, Shreveport, LA 71157. Checks payable to MSPSPS.