



# THE FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

The Newsletter of the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society

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## Great Party!

The big news around the Shreveport Water Works Museum lately has been the Food Trucks At The Museum party on May 7. The weather was sunny and dry (finally, compared to recent times) and more than 500 visitors steadily streamed through the gate after the opening bell at 11am.

Many folks headed straight to a food truck for lunch, but frequently lunch came from more than one stop since there were so many tasty choices available. Moni's Brats, Jester Catering, Hot Tamale Tina, The Missing Link, Eddie's Restaurant, and Ray's Yes We're Cookin' were all on hand to tempt the taste buds with yummy fresh creations. Diners could eat under the live oak next to the parking lot to be handy for second servings or move to the other picnic area in the back yard to listen to one of the bands.



*Ukulele Gumbo players at work*

Ukulele Gumbo was on stage first and played an assortment of old favorites that had lots of toes tappin'. There were six players at work, all of them strumming a ukulele of one size or another that harmonized perfectly with the atmosphere of the Victorian-era setting. Po' Boy McCoy (aka Chris Webb) was up next with his one man band of instruments ranging from an accordion to drums. Po' Boy also put on a great show that was enjoyed by listeners.

Everyone usually headed for the silent auction at some point where they could be tempted by a wide array of offerings ranging from collectible prints by O. Winston Link to handmade craft and art items to bowling gift certificates. Marilyn Joiner, assisted by Nettie Brown, worked, worked, and worked some more to turn the auction into a big success that not only brought in money for the museum (almost \$4000 for the day from everything) but gave attendees another fun activity.



*Marilyn Joiner (R) & Nettie Brown (L) overseeing auction*

In spite of the temptations of live music, great food, and unusual shopping, the big hit of the day seemed to be the water works itself. Visitors poured through the water works, either guiding themselves or waiting in line in big groups for the hourly guided tours being offered by our hard-worked tour guides of Kevin Haines, Charlie Johnson, Paul Williams, and Pam Ward. The high level of interest in the water works and the appreciative comments of visitors were particularly gratifying since this was really the whole point of having the event. Maybe we'll still hear people say "I never knew this was here", but there are now at least 500 fewer who will be saying it.

It took a lot of work to have all this fun. In addition to the helpers already mentioned, the Tonnies family (Linda, Keith, Chris, and Casey) manned a soft drink/souvenir table. Stacy Brown, Sandy Jones, Morgan McGuire, Hannah McGuire, and Cathy Ward manned a second soft drink spot and the souvenir counter. Russell Pedro, Gary Fox, Jim McClure, and Jeff Cornelius took care of Railroad Museum tours, souvenirs, and information. Jeff Little was a good natured all around



*Kevin Haines entertains one of many guided tours*

roustabout. Liz Swaine and her team from Downtown Development Authority (particularly Stacie Leng and E. D. Stewart) deserve special mention and thanks for sponsoring the event and doing the legwork needed for publicity, setting up, cleaning up, and miscellaneous gettin', liftin', and totin'. Special thanks also to our corporate event sponsors of Vintage Realty, United Title, and Red River Quilters.

Also deserving of an honorable mention is Casey Tonnies. Casey's job was to sit by the driveway with a counter to be sure we had an accurate tally of how many visitors came in. And, it turned out that Casey won the event door prize, then donated half the proceeds back to the Preservation Society instead of keeping it all!

Everybody involved in throwing the party, from the food trucks to the volunteers, had a great day and gave a thumbs-up to repeating this again sometime. So, stay tuned for Food Trucks At The Museum II!



*Liz Swaine (r) & Stacie Leng (c) chat with Juanita Ward*



*Sandy Jones (l), Hannah McGuire (c), & Morgan McGuire (r) sell drinks*

## Give For Good

The Community Foundation of North Louisiana has an annual fundraising event called Give For Good (see our Spring newsletter) that seeks to bring in fresh donations for local nonprofits. The format is somewhat like an old-fashioned telethon with the internet substituted for the telephone, and donors were invited to log on and make donations online for the 24 hours of May 3. Donations go straight to the Community Foundation, which then distributes the money to the designated nonprofits plus a prorata amount from a "Lagniappe Fund" collected by the Community Foundation. At least, that was the plan.

Give For Good is a simultaneous nationwide event involving numerous organizations like the Community Foundation which have contracted with an outside company, Kimbia Corporation, to handle the mechanics of the campaign. This year Kimbia's web servers bogged down during Give For Good and some donors were rejected or mishandled, which prompted the Community Foundation to extend the event for another day to give would-be donors another chance to complete their transactions. We heard from a few frustrated donors trying to get through to give to the McNeill Street Preservation Society, but hopefully everybody eventually got their transaction done.

Despite the uncooperative technology, the Community Foundation received a record \$1.76 million from almost 7000 donors for distribution to 40 local nonprofits like the Preservation Society. Donations for the Preservation Society totaled almost \$2000 from 28 donors, and it appears that the Lagniappe Fund will add over 10% to this amount when the final distribution is made later this month. This is a nice boost since the Preservation Society's normal annual income from sources other than grants is usually less than \$15,000.

## Budget Battles

The Legislature has been at work continuously since January seeking a solution to yet another big budget deficit. They are currently in Baton Rouge for their second special session looking for a way to close the final \$600 million gap. The Governor is predicting that “safety net” state hospitals and a popular but expensive college tuition grant program (TOPS) will suffer unless still more new taxes are levied.

Most state museums, including the Shreveport Water Works Museum, were being threatened with closure during the earlier regular session since the Governor’s draft budget that was submitted to the Legislature did not include any money for them. In fact, a bill was submitted, passed by the Senate, and sent to the House that would have repealed the law authorizing the state to own and operate the SWWM, thus closing it. However, before anything was passed or finalized the Governor relented and agreed to add back the roughly \$3 million that the Secretary of State needs for his museums, which is what the Legislature ultimately passed in its regular session before reconvening on June 6 for the second special session.

The drama of threatened crippling budget cuts to museums followed by an 11<sup>th</sup> hour rescue has been an almost annual event since 2011 as the state grapples with recurrent money shortfalls. Museums are portrayed as discretionary versus critical state services like education. But each time this happens, elected officials face a barrage of criticism from a public that wants these museums (thank you for your emails and letters!) and are forced to recognize that tourism is a huge industry in Louisiana that generates a lot of tax revenue. Museums of all kinds are part of the visitor draw. Public support for museums was particularly vocal and effective during this year’s debate, in part due to the leadership of our new Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser who oversees the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism.

So, the budget for the upcoming 2016-2017 fiscal year maintains the status quo of recent times, although there is always the risk of another mid-year emergency cutback ordered by the Governor in the event of a shortfall.

## Museum Operations

The McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society’s purpose in life is to preserve the historic Pumping Station site and to support the operation of the Shreveport Water Works Museum. So, how’s the SWWM doing lately? Pretty well, thank you!

Visitor traffic in 2015 declined over 20% from the high mark of about 4800 set in 2014, undoubtedly due to the bad publicity from the state’s cutbacks to museums and from the associated reduction in the hours per week that the museum is open. (You can’t have visitors if you’re not open!) During 2016, visitor numbers are up over last year but are continuing to lag about 5% behind 2014 since the museum is still open only three and one-half days per week.

Operating hours are currently Thursday through Saturday from 10am to 4pm and Sunday from 12n to 4pm. The museum’s one and only (part-time) employee is Kevin Haines, who is doing a great job providing a memorable experience for visitors, but Kevin is working the maximum number of hours allowed to a part-time employee by state rules. So, if Kevin comes in after regular hours for something like a rental party, he must close the museum to visitors at another time to offset.

Additional manpower to operate the museum is sorely needed, not only to guide visitors but to keep the facility tidied up and to keep up with the light maintenance that every building needs, particularly one that is over 100 years old. Hopefully the state will be able to do something to help in this regard when (if?) the available budget money gets clarified.



## Odds ‘n Ends

- Your Spring newsletter announced the award of a \$10,000 grant from Union Pacific Foundation that will be used for re-pointing work. The actual check was not due until June, so we’re still waiting on that to get started. The Preservation Society’s board has earmarked another \$10,000 received from other donors to make a \$20,000 project.
- As a reminder, the new web site ([www.shreveportwaterworks.org](http://www.shreveportwaterworks.org)) is capable of accepting memberships and donations online. You can also use it to purchase our book or a t-shirt by making a donation of the correct amount and including a note saying what you want. Of course, purchases are also possible by mailing in the order form with an old fashioned check.
- Another bit of technology added recently is the ability to accept credit card payments at the museum for souvenirs, donations, or memberships. No more “cash or checks only.”
- The SWWM recently won a “Best Of” award from reviewers at ThreeBestRated.com. The museum was rated as one of the three best landmarks in Shreveport. Check it out at [threebestrated.com/landmarks-in-shreveport-la](http://threebestrated.com/landmarks-in-shreveport-la). Unfortunately, their review got the operating hours wrong by listing the out-of-date information from better budget times. Reviewers on Trip Advisor like the museum, too, consistently ranking it among the top attractions in Shreveport.
- Looking for something to do with your summer guests? Kids or grandkids asking what they can do? Bring them to the Water Works Museum, it's fun and educational (without them really knowing). And we have a neat steam whistle! Come support this local attraction that brings in national and international visitors!