



THE FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

The Newsletter of the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society

P.O. Box 957
Shreveport, LA 711 63

www.mcneillstreet.org
318-221-3388

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Planning Ahead

The State's budget crisis last Spring cut funding and disrupted operations so severely that the ongoing viability of the Shreveport Water Works Museum (and other state museums) would have been questionable if the Legislature had not acted to restore things to the way they were. Even though this immediate crisis has passed, it did drive home the point that the State has been an unreliable financial partner and has never actually provided adequate money for either operations, maintenance, or preservation work at the Pumping Station. Being open as much as 40 hours per week continues to be out of sight. The museum has never had a director, or any other full-time employee, to oversee the operation and improvement of the site, and it took an act of the Legislature with the enticement of matching funds to get our big Adolphus-Custodis chimney restored earlier this year. So, State support has made it possible to have a Shreveport Water Works Museum, but has left a lot to be desired.

This situation has prompted discussions between members of the board of directors and with a few key community leaders about what to do before another crisis hits. At least two of the Secretary of State's museums have either arranged to be taken over by a different local government unit or are considering it. For the SWWM, it was concluded that the best course of action was to undertake a major fundraising initiative to try to give the Preservation Society some financial strength that doesn't depend on the State. Our members have been donating \$5,000 to \$10,000 each year that is being used to support museum operations and small projects, but this is not nearly enough.

What else do we need money for? First priority is restoration work at the site to ensure that things are still here in one piece into the future. The Pumping Station is mostly taken for granted locally, but it is a nationally important historic landmark that we just can't allow to be neglected. Second priority is to expand and improve the museum being operated at the site (better exhibits, maybe some live steam), and third priority is an endowment that will produce an annual revenue stream to support operations. Even though the priorities are "1-2-3", all of them are important, and they are all sorely needed.

How much money? Somewhere around \$3 million is needed for all the priorities, including about \$500,000 to get us through the immediate first priority restoration work. This is clearly a lot of money, but actually quite a bit less than has been raised in the past for other initiatives that the community has gotten behind.

The McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society has never undertaken any actual significant fundraising other than the annual membership enrollment effort (see companion article in this newsletter). Raising a lot of money is not easy to do (no surprise there!) and to be successful requires some dedicated time and expertise. Fortunately, one of the Preservation Society's members with a little time and a lot of expertise has volunteered to organize and lead the fundraising effort. He is just getting started, so we can't say yet just how, who, and what will be involved. So, please keep your collective fingers crossed for success, and most important, be positive if you are one of the people contacted to help!

MUSEUM EXPANDS OPEN HOURS

Since first budget slash in 2011, the state has paid a part-time employee to operate the museum three days per week, which has typically totaled only 18 hours. As regular readers know, during recent years, the Preservation Society has been contributing to payroll for a second employee to add two more open days. The recent Spring-time budget crisis upset this arrangement, but the new fiscal year has actually loosened the purse strings a bit, and the State has returned the \$3500 which the Preservation Society contributed to operate the museum during the fiscal emergency, which we didn't expect beforehand but was definitely welcome.

In another welcome development, executives in the Secretary of State's museum division have recently slightly eased the tight restrictions on how many hours per week they will allow the Shreveport Water Works

Museum to be open. The state is now operating the museum 28 hours per week at their expense, and the Preservation Society is no longer contributing anything to the payroll cost. This has allowed slightly expanded operating hours that are now 10a to 4p Wednesday through Saturday, plus for the first time the museum is now also open on Sunday afternoon from 1p to 5p (closed on Monday and Tuesday).

Special gifts

The McNeill Street Preservation Society has received a donation from Rory and Peggy Wisner in memory of Jim Nuttall, Peggy's father. Rory's company is matching the donation for an even bigger result. Readers will surely recall that Jim was one of the Pumping Station's biggest fans and volunteers. Thank you very much to the Wisner's for this thoughtful way to remember a special person.

Please Read This!

There is an enclosed letter urging all our readers to renew their Preservation Society membership or join up if not already a member that we hope you will give favorable consideration. Memberships are for a rolling twelve months and can be begun at any time, but almost all Preservation Society members renew now to help out with the bookkeeping, plus we leave it up to you to keep track of your status and don't mail out reminders (stamps are expensive nowadays!).

The State (usually) pays for basic expenses like utilities, but State support is VERY limited. Donations from members (and the occasional friend who doesn't want to be a member) are used by the Preservation Society to pay for all the activities we do from printing the newsletter to buying various items needed to operate the museum, such as light bulbs, paint, supplies for the steam engines, brochures, exhibit signs and many other things that make the site a more welcoming and interesting place to visit.

The sum of all these mostly small expenses usually soaks up the annual donations, but we sometimes have extra money for a fix-it project as well, although as you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, we are about to undertake a fundraising campaign seeking bigger money that can be used for bigger projects. So, the Preservation Society really, really needs your continued help to pay the many expenses for preserving a large and old historic site and making it an interesting museum to visit.

Please see the enclosed letter for more information and suggestions.

We're Getting Prettier On The Web

The Preservation Society has had an internet web site for quite a long time that has been used to publicize the Pumping Station and pass along news. This is good, but since it has been around such a long time, our web site has acquired a bit of a dated appearance due to the development of new techniques and technology improvements over the years. To help us modernize the Pumping Station's online appearance to the world, the Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau has awarded the Preservation Society a grant that will be used to pay for designing a new web site.

The Preservation Society has hired the W.L. Gaiennie Company to do this, and they are hard at work on the project now. The new site will feature improvements not only in appearance, but will add new capabilities, like making donations online with a credit card and joining the Preservation Society. We're also working on the ability to make online purchases of t-shirts and our book for those who might wish to do that. The new site should be ready very soon, but probably not quite by the time you read this. The new web site has the same address as the old one (www.mcneillstreet.org), so give it a look soon.

Member Notice

The annual membership meeting of the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society will be at 6pm on February 1, 2016. The principal item of business will be to elect directors to the Board.