

THE FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

The Newsletter of the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society

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Fall 2014

Award for the Pumping Station

The Louisiana section of the American Society of Civil Engineers is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. As a part of the various activities to highlight the occasion, fifteen Louisiana projects have been designated the state's top civil engineering projects, one project from each of fifteen categories.

The nominees for recognition were selected by the Louisiana ASCE's History and Heritage Committee, then passed to a special committee of eminent civil engineers from around the state. The winner for "Water and Wastewater" was the McNeill Street Pumping Station, which has, of course, already been recognized by the national ASCE as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark. Other winners included such projects as the Louisiana Superdome, Lake Pontchartrain Causeway, New Orleans streetcars, and Shreveport's Texas Street bridge.

The selections were announced at a Centennial Celebration banquet in Baton Rouge on August 9. Bob Jacobsen, P.E., president of the Louisiana ASCE, had these comments: "Civil engineers are responsible for the building blocks of our society, and Louisiana has some of the best in the world. When you look at what civil engineers have done in Louisiana over the past 100 years, it truly is phenomenal. We have built the longest bridges, the busiest ports and some of the strongest structures anywhere."

We definitely agree with Mr. Jacobsen that the Pumping Station belongs on the list of "the best"!

Scouts Help Out Again



Eagle-Scout-to-be Stephen Lanclos

The south wall of the pumphouse in the area of the boiler room and machine shop abuts a berm that rises several feet on an uphill slope to the west settling basin. When it rains, water runs down the hill to the wall and is joined by additional run-off from a roof gutter downspout. All this water is supposed to run into a storm drain at the west end of the wall, but for years some of it has been finding ways through the wall and getting into the building. Some digging a few years ago by Hank Forester discovered that there is a concrete drainage pan along the wall that had been covered over by several inches of dirt

due to erosion over the years from the hillside. Hank's digging helped for a while, but then nature took its course and the problem returned.

Stephen Lanclos from Scout Troop 186 in Benton has come to the rescue. Stephen wants to be an Eagle Scout and was looking for a suitable service project and decided to tackle correcting



Scout crew with mostly completed retaining wall

this drainage problem for the museum. The supervising Scout council gave him the “OK” and he set to work, and it was indeed work.

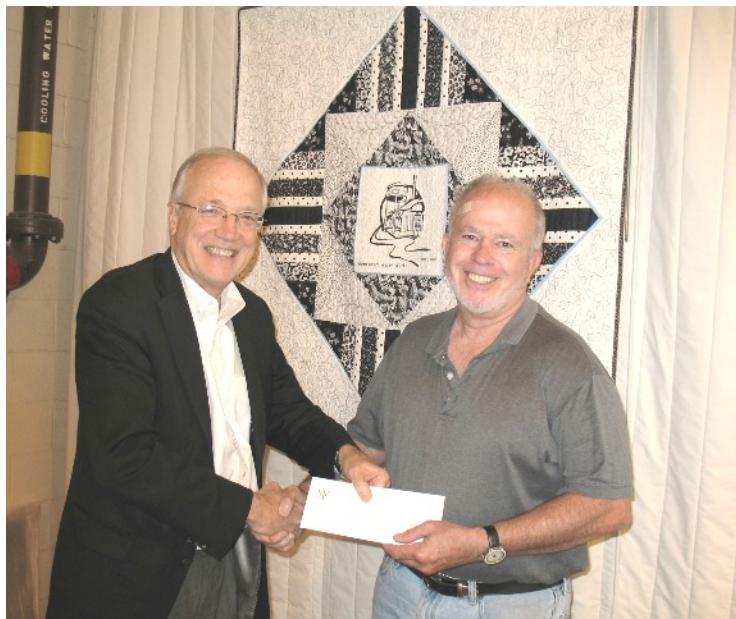
First step was digging and carrying away multi-wheelbarrow loads of dirt to clear the area covered by erosion, all the while taking care to avoid conduit and pipes that were in the way and needed to be preserved. All of the buried old concrete was not in the best shape, so a layer of gravel was spread over it to provide a hard bottom again. Then to finish it off and make things stay put, a small cinder block retaining wall was installed to protect the drainage path and keep off fresh dirt from the hillside. Much of the material was donated by Builder’s Supply, and Stephen corralled workers from the Scout troop to help him with the labor.

The finished project looks great and fits right into the site and has already been tested by a couple of summer showers. All of us at the Shreveport Water Works Museum extend a huge “thank you” to Stephen and his helpers and congratulate him on his hard work over the years towards achieving the elite status of Eagle Scout.

The Check Is Here!

As reported in the last edition of your newsletter, the Community Foundation of North Louisiana has awarded the Preservation Society a \$45,000 grant to be used for repairing brickwork in the exterior wall of the oldest parts of the pumphouse. Mr. Bobby Jelks, representing the Foundation, came to the August board meeting with the check in hand to present to the Preservation Society. Society president Conway Link was obviously pleased to accept the money (see adjacent picture!) and thanked Mr. Jelks and the Community Foundation for their interest and generosity in preserving one of Shreveport’s historic crown jewels.

Work on spending the money to repoint the mortar in the old wall is moving forward. An architect has been hired to manage the project and requests for bids will be going out any day. The actual construction is expected to take about a month once it gets underway.



Conway Link (R) accepts grant check from Bobby Jelks (L)



Model of proposed expansion.. North Common St is in foreground & driveway to SWWM separates new parking area from new railroad exhibits

A NEW NEIGHBOR?

No, not really. More like an existing neighbor adding on. The Red River Valley Historical Railroad Society has had its exhibits on display at the Shreveport Water Works Museum for almost two years, but they’ve also got some rolling stock stored away that Society members want to display somewhere. There are two steam locomotives, a baggage car, a passenger coach, a dining car, a caboose, and some smaller pieces, and the old Caspiana Plantation Depot is also stored and available to be relocated. The dining car is particularly intriguing, as it could be refurbished into a venue for small parties.

The railroad society’s partnership with the SWWM has been a good thing for both groups, but it did create the apparently unavoidable problem of what to do with these big items. After much head scratching, someone came up with the idea of using the vacant land between the SWWM

gate and North Common Street. There is an active rail spur that runs through the land that provides a way to roll in the rail cars, but from that good beginning, there are multiple problems to be worked out. For starters, the property is mostly owned by the City, but General Scrap Metal and the highway department also control pieces that are needed. Other impediments are that there are several big water mains buried at one end of the site, that about half the property is an overgrown small hill, and that there is a power line right-of-way at the other end from the water mains. Nevertheless, creative minds will not be denied, and one-by-one, solutions are being worked out to each problem. The hill can be cleared and leveled, the right-of-way avoided, and all the landowners have tentatively agreed to transfer their property to the use of the railroad society. As the largest property owner, the City of Shreveport is the key player, and they are working on drafting a contract to lease the land to the railroad society.

Although there are still opportunities for a derailment, the plan is now promising to move forward. The existing railroad museum inside the SWWM gate would continue as it is. The present railroad museum has been a very nice addition to the site that creates an even better visitor attraction than either the SWWM or railroad museum by itself would be. Expansion of the railroad exhibits is sure to add more interest and bring even more visitors to see our historic marvels. We'll keep you abreast of how things are going as events unfold in coming months.

Engineering Map of America

The Public Broadcasting System's American Experience program has created an on-line, interactive map that showcases America's greatest engineering feats and that includes the McNeill Street Pumping Station. Dozens of museums like us, institutions, and PBS stations have partnered with American Experience to create a visual, interactive and crowd-sourced representation of the most significant engineering projects in the United States with archival images, documents, and videos related to America's engineering history.

Local helpers Paul Williams and Jennifer Middleton generously volunteered to organize the information for the Shreveport Water Works Museum at the McNeill Street Pumping Station and upload it to the PBS internet system. There are tons of pictures, anecdotes, and narratives to chose from and most couldn't make it onto the map, but maybe the information that is listed there will give map users at least a small overview of site history and stimulate some curiosity to come see the real thing.

You can have a look at our information and browse through a lot of other interesting historic engineering sites using the following link: www.pbs.org/engineeringmap.

Chimney Work Stalled

The previous edition of your newsletter reported that the state intends to repair the big chimney that dates from 1900 and was advertising for bids. Latest news is that the bids came in high and exceeded the available funds. The state has reorganized the bidding and is now advertising again in hopes of better results. Hopefully the next edition of the newsletter will be able to report that the job is done.

Out and About

The Shreveport Water Works Museum will have a special display at the upcoming Red River Quilters annual show. This year's show is a "Sea of Quilts", and the theme for the quilt design competition is "water", so the Water Works Museum will be a natural fit for the program.

We'll be displaying a custom-made quilt for the Water Works courtesy of Cathy Ward (see the quilt behind Link/Jelks in the picture with the Community Foundation story) with signs and handouts of information about the museum for show attendees to peruse. The show always draws several hundred visitors, plus this year there is a motorhome convention in town at the same time that is getting a special invitation to attend, so there should be lots of lookers at our exhibit.

The show is at Riverview Hall on Fant Parkway and is open 10am – 6pm Friday October 3, then merges with the Red River Revel on Saturday with hours of 11am – 6pm and again on Sunday October 5, 11am – 4pm. A nominal admission is charged.

McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society
P.O. Box 957
Shreveport, LA 71163

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.