



THE FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

The Newsletter of the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society

P.O. Box 957
Shreveport, LA 711 63

www.shreveportwaterworks.org
318-221-3388

Winter 2016

Museum Ordered To Close

The Shreveport Water Works Museum (along with Spring Street Historical Museum and Louisiana State Exhibit Museum here in Shreveport) is operated by Louisiana Secretary of State Tom Schedler . Secretary Schedler has decided that the funds appropriated by the Legislature are inadequate to continue forward past January 1, and in a letter dated December 5, he has disclosed that SWWM and Spring Street Museum will cease to operate on January 1. He intends to exercise a clause contained in the act of donation that gave the site to the state to return the facility to the original owner, which is the City of Shreveport for SWWM.

This was something of a surprise move, as discussions had been underway between Schedler, Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser, and the Governor's office concerning transferring the SWWM (and likely other museums) during 2017 to the Lt. Governor's Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, which operates a group of state museums of their own. Money is just as tight under the Lt. Governor as for the Secretary of State, but it was hoped that the consolidation of museums in one agency would help.

So what will happen now? The discussion with the Lt. Governor will continue in order to determine if he is willing and able to take SWWM into his department. The City is reluctant to see the SWWM close, but hasn't budgeted anything for the museum in 2017 and would have difficulty finding the money in any case, so they have also contacted the Lt. Governor about his intentions. If the Lt. Governor was to decide in favor of accepting SWWM, the transfer would be fairly transparent at this end with only the administrative leadership in Baton Rouge changing and operations continuing forward without interruption.

The situation gets more complicated and uncertain if that doesn't happen and Secretary Schedler proceeds with reverting the Pumping Station to the City. Legal documents will have to be drafted and signed and the City will have to decide what to do next. At least a temporary closure would likely be unavoidable in this case while the transfer took place. The City's revenue and budget next year are forecast to be almost 10% less than in 2016, so even though they are reluctant to see the SWWM close, they will also be reluctant to go into the museum business unless they get some help from somewhere.

The McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society intends to step forward and offer to partner with the City or whoever ultimately acquires the museum. Our members have put far too much time, money, and sweat into saving the Pumping Station from decay to quit now! There are multiple options that creative minds can devise, and the Society has enough money to fund museum operations for several months, and probably a year if needed, while a permanent arrangement is worked out. Regardless of what happens with the Shreveport Water Works Museum, we also intend to continue to be on hand to make the repairs and maintenance needed to preserve the historic McNeill Street Pumping Station from falling once again into decay.

This has been a rather downbeat report on a distressing state of affairs, but the leadership of the Preservation Society is hopeful that the solution that ultimately emerges will in the end produce an arrangement that is more stable and better for the SWWM than the annual fiscal crises suffered under state management each year since 2011. As Rosie the Riveter once famously said, "We can do it".

Special Gifts

Peggy and Rory Wisner have made a donation to the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society in honor of Peggy's father, Jim Nuttall. And, Rory's company is matching the gift to double the value. Jim, of course, prior to his passing was an indispensable friend of the Pumping Station who over the years spent an untold amount of time on site doing whatever needed to be done to restore and preserve things. Jim was a whiz at mechanical and electrical projects and devised many of the "fixes" that are still in use in the mu-

seum today. The Preservation Society is extremely grateful for the generous and thoughtful way Peggy and Rory have chosen to remember a great friend and great person, Jim Nuttall.

Did You Know.....

All of the big steam powered pumps at the water works were built by the Worthington Pump and Machinery Company, founded by Henry Worthington in 1840, who was also a founder of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. By the time the first Worthington pump was purchased for the water works in the late 1890's, the company was being run by his son Charles Worthington. Charles was an even more remarkable individual than his dad and became an internationally known industrialist and sportsman. He was at the center of the hydraulic pumping industry and then added contributing to the development of the American tractor (steam powered) to his accomplishments.

In 1899 Charles sold his interests in Worthington Pump to a new consortium named International Steam Pump Company and then "retired" in 1900 at age 46. But, not for long. The automobile age was now dawning, and Worthington was interested. He designed and built several steam automobiles, then turned to the gasoline engine and organized the Worthington Automobile Company that built several kinds of domestic and foreign pleasure cars.

Worthington was also an avid golfer and built the Buckwood Inn and surrounding Shawnee Country Club in New York. In 1912 he asked a group of pro golfers to be guests at the Inn to propose organizing the Professional Golfers Association, which they did. Improving golf course maintenance led Worthington to inventing the first commercially successful ganged mower, which led to the founding of the Worthington mower company, which in 1945 was sold to Jacobsen Manufacturing, that still produces mowers.

There's a lot more to tell about the man with the connection to the water works, but this newsletter is out of space!

Please Read This!

There is an enclosed letter urging all our readers to renew their Preservation Society membership or to join up if not already a member that we hope you will give favorable consideration. As you have read elsewhere in the newsletter, state support is being withdrawn and the Preservation Society needs your financial support even more than ever.

Donations in response to this annual appeal made with the newsletter are usually in the range of \$5,000 to \$6,000. But, the good news is that annual receipts by the Preservation Society have varied widely during the previous five years in response to such things as special gifts and the "Food Trucks" event and have sometimes reached more than \$15,000. This does not include grants, as that money must be spent for the particular purpose promised to the granter.

The state has been spending about \$50,000 per year to run the museum, which is not much for them but a lot for the Preservation Society. If the Preservation Society takes on even partial responsibility for operating the Shreveport Water Works Museum, we'll need to really dig in and try to raise as much as we can. So, the Preservation Society really, really needs your continued help to try and be prepared to contribute a lot more toward operating the SWWM than it ever has before as well as to continue working on the numerous repairs and restoration projects on our list.

Please see the enclosed letter for more information and suggestions.

Member Notice

The annual membership meeting of the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society will be at 6pm on February 6, 2017. The principal item of business will be to elect directors to the Board.