



THE FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

The Newsletter of the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society

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Spring 2017

Museum Is Open

A lot has happened since your last newsletter concerning the ownership and operation of the Shreveport Water Works Museum, but the short version is that the City of Shreveport, not the State, now owns the property and the museum is open, never closed even temporarily, and intends to remain open. Here are the details:

Last fall Secretary of State Tom Schedler put the McNeill Street Preservation Society and the City of Shreveport on notice that he intended to close SWWM on January 1 and return ownership of the site to the City. Discussions then were undertaken between all these parties and Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser about the feasibility of an alternate plan of transferring the museum to his Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism that also operates quite a few museums and state historic parks. The Lt. Governor ultimately reluctantly decided as December moved toward January 1 that he couldn't do this unless the Legislature approved more money for his department, which was very unlikely to happen in the face of a special session to cut the budget.

At this point, Shreveport's Mayor Ollie Tyler contacted Secretary Schedler and requested an extension of the closing deadline until February 28 to give the City, which was about to be the owner of the Pumping Station once again, some time to work out an alternative to the threatened closure. Schedler agreed to do so, provided the state's cost to continue operations during this interval was repaid, which the Preservation Society then told the City and State it would do. So, during January and February the SWWM continued to operate under the State with the Preservation Society ultimately reimbursing their invoiced costs totaling \$3,718.

During the January/February reprieve, the City and State signed off the required document returning legal ownership and the City once again took possession of its historic water works on March 1. Also taking effect on March 1 was a temporary property use agreement approved by the Mayor between the City and the Preservation Society, which is "temporary" because it will be replaced by a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) that will be negotiated then approved by the City Council. The CEA is not in place yet, but will likely be similar to the current temporary deal that in general provides for the City to own and maintain the site and for the Preservation Society to operate the museum.

Financially, this means that the Preservation Society will be paying for museum employees, office expenses, exhibits, advertising, telephone, gas and electricity, and other such similar expenses. The exact price tag for all this is not known right now, but best guess is between \$25,000 and \$35,000 dollars per year. We believe this is manageable, but it will challenge the Preservation Society to bring in more money than ever before on an annual basis. Calendar year 2016 was the first step in that direction because a surge in donations late in the year after the threatened closing by the state became known pushed total income for the year up enough to operate in 2017. Grants are almost always restricted from being used for operating expenses, so we're not expecting much help from that direction. Donations from supporters of the museum will have to be the main source of money. Your Board of Directors has its collective thinking cap on looking for ideas, and updates on that will be forthcoming, with email friends and web site browsers getting the news first.

Well.....that's about where we are at the moment. The Preservation Society is working to take on its new role as operator, which comes with some administrative type obligations, like handling payroll and paying the bills, but visitors have been pouring through while the work is getting done behind the scenes. We are hopeful that the visitor experience will actually improve, because as operator we will have more flexibility than before to do things like adjust operating hours and be open more. Currently, hours re-



main the same as before, which is 10a - 4p Thursday through Saturday and 12n - 4p Sunday.

It will really be great if all the stress and uncertainty of recent months result in a better than ever Shreveport Water Works Museum, and that is the goal!

Museum Receiving Grant from Union Pacific

The Preservation Society recently received some great news from the Union Pacific Foundation advising that our grant application for repointing mortar in the filter wing of the pumphouse has been approved! If this announcement seems familiar, it's because the same thing happened about this time last year, so we've now been awarded \$20,000 altogether by Union Pacific Foundation. The Union Pacific letter says that they "have a long-standing commitment to improving the quality of life in the communities they serve and have the goal that UP employees will take pride in their company's civic leadership and appreciate UP as an excellent corporate citizen." The Preservation Society definitely appreciates Union Pacific as a corporate citizen and is grateful to have the company and its employees as a part of our community.

The work from last year's grant plus this year's grant plus another grant application still outstanding and not yet awarded (keep your fingers crossed) would probably allow the completion of repointing work on the filter wing to be within sight, although we won't know for sure until the final round of bids are processed. When the filter wing is done, all of the most urgently needed repointing outside will be complete, but nothing has been done on the inside walls yet, so we'll need to start thinking about that as they are in bad shape in many places.

In some related additional good news, the Red River Valley Railroad Historical Society also received a \$10,000 award from Union Pacific. The railroad society will use their money to develop the vacant property between the Water Works Museum and North Common into a spot to exhibit their various pieces of rolling stock. They are currently processing the project application through the Metropolitan Planning Commission and are ensnared in unexpected requirements there. The present Railroad Museum inside the Water Works Museum fence has been an excellent addition that draws in a lot of visitors, and everybody who knows about or hears about the expansion can't wait until it is done.

Special Gifts

The Nuttall family has made a special donation to the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society in memory of Jim Nuttall. Regular readers of the newsletter over the years know that Jim was one of the Pumping Station's biggest fans who spent many, many hours restoring it and making the Shreveport Water Works Museum a great place to visit. We are extremely grateful for this thoughtful way the Nuttalls are remembering a wonderful person.

The "Mohr Girls" have made a gift to the Preservation Society honoring their father, James Mohr. James has been an advocate and worker for preserving the Pumping Station for years that have turned into decades and continues to serve on the Preservation Society's Board of Directors as he has for quite a few years. The Pumping Station is lucky to have James and his generous children as friends.

New Endowment Fund Created

Donations to the Community Foundation designated for the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society have accumulated up to more than \$5,000, which is the point at which an endowment can be opened on behalf of the Preservation Society. From now on, the Community Foundation will pay the Preservation Society a portion of the annual earnings of the endowed Fund and manage the Fund so that inflation doesn't erode the value of the principal. Currently, the pay out is about 4% per year. If you would like to contribute to the Fund and help with the Preservation Society's financial needs in perpetuity, you can send a check to Community Foundation, 401 Edwards Street, Suite 105, Shreveport LA 71101 and include a note saying that the donation is for the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society Fund. You can also donate on the Community Foundation's web site (www.cfnla.org) and click your way through the menus until you get to "other ways to give", then follow the instructions. Donations are tax deductible.

A Fan From Afar

During the height of the uncertainty about the future of the Shreveport Water Works Museum in January, we received an email from an unexpected place: Matthew Feldwick in the United Kingdom. Matthew is a volunteer at the historic Twyford Waterworks, which is in southern England roughly 60 miles southwest of London. Unbeknownst to us, he has been following the SWWM's recent trials via the internet and wanted to offer his encouragement and information about the restoration work that is going forward at Twyford.

Matthew's email related how restoration and public activities at that water works are being managed and funded to perhaps give us some ideas that could be adapted and adopted here. For example, they use periodic public events each year to raise a lot of the money they need. They are working with an interesting and highly unusual steam powered water plant from generally the same era as here that is largely intact, also like here. You can read more about the details on their web site (www.twyfordwaterworks.co.uk).



Matthew also drafted an insightful letter of support that he sent for our use, which we provided to the city as it was quite thought provoking. Matthew said it better than we can paraphrase, so here is an excerpt from his letter:

“The Water Works *{in Shreveport}* also remains as a constant within the city and a tangible link to the past generations who lived within. In recent decades I understand that Shreveport has undergone something of a cultural re-invention; in similar cities around the world this has often resulted in the loss of history from earlier eras. I am reminded of a water pumping station in Japan which was supplied with steam engines from England, all long scrapped with only part of the buildings remaining. This small fragment is now cherished with palpable sadness at the loss of the machinery – the curators visited the pumping station here in Twyford last year to take pictures and gain an understanding on what had been destroyed.

In my work with historic buildings and artifacts, I am always mindful that it is not just by my peers that my actions are judged, but by those yet to come, perhaps in hundreds of years time.”

Well said Matthew, and a timely reminder of the importance of what we are about at the Shreveport Water Works Museum at the McNeill Street Pumping Station.

Give For Good

The Community Foundation of North Louisiana annually organizes a “donate-a-thon” fundraising campaign for the benefit of local nonprofit organizations. This year's event is scheduled for May 2, and during the 24 hours of that day donors are invited to contribute to the charity of their choice via a special web site called Give For Good (www.giveforgoodnla.org). Donations are accepted online only.

After the day is over, the Community Foundation will tally up everything, send “thank you's” to donors and distribute the proceeds received for each charity to that charity plus a share of a bonus Lagniappe Fund contributed by event sponsors. Last year was the Preservation Society's first year to participate, and we received over \$2,000, including the Lagniappe Fund, from almost 30 donors.

So, here is your chance to make a donation to the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society (that's the name to look for on the Give For Good web site) and give it a little boost from the Lagniappe, as well as have a little fun with the telethon atmosphere of the event. You can follow the day's progress online, and smartphone users can download an app that will speed the donation and follow-along process.

There will be updates on the final details posted on the Preservation Society's web site as the time draws nearer (www.shreveportwaterworks.org).

Remember, Tuesday May 2 from midnight to midnight.

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.