

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

Fall 2018

Did You Know...

.....that fluoridation of Shreveport's drinking water to prevent tooth decay was once so controversial that the Louisiana Supreme Court got involved?

In 1954 the City Council, under pressure from the Chamber of Commerce, various regional Councils of Dental Health, Shreveport Medical Society, and the City Board of Health, voted to authorize the Commissioner of Public Utilities to acquire fluoridation equipment for the water system. Opponents soon emerged, charging that fluoridation was "mass medication" that the government had no right to force on people and that it was a step towards "socialism or even communism", and within two weeks had secured an injunction blocking the city's move while the courts decided the issue.

The case worked its way up to the Louisiana Supreme Court, which held in a landmark decision on the issue that a city had the right to protect public health and fluoridation fell within the limits of this right. But city government, no doubt completely surprised by the emotional opposition, did not proceed with the project even after winning in court.

Fluoridation lay dormant until early 1973 when area dentists again asked that the city's drinking water be fluoridated. Mayor Calhoun Allen passed the matter on to Public Utilities Commissioner Bill Collins, who let it die once again. But four years later in 1977, a Chamber of Commerce task force released a report strongly supporting fluoridation, noting that it was cheap, safe, and effective. The fight was once again on, and if anything even more hotly debated than twenty years earlier.

Opponents reacted quickly, and this time organized the Shreveport Pure Water Association that brought in a nationally known anti-fluoridationist speaker and challenged newly-elected Public Utilities Commissioner Billy Guin to a public debate. Guin was a strong supporter of fluoridation, and the debate quickly degenerated into a rowdy struggle that changed no one's mind, in part because the room was largely filled with opponents to the idea. The next day, Guin asked the City Council for \$10,000 for an engineering study of fluoridation, which was rejected. The Council instead opted for only preliminary engineering and more study and a public hearing on the matter.

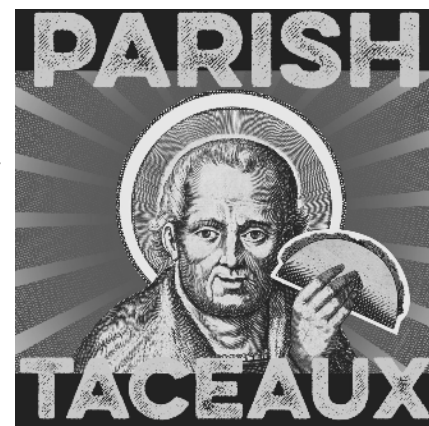
This attempt at compromise satisfied no one and was attacked by both sides. At the public hearing two weeks after the Council meeting, proponents argued that fluoridation was safe and effective, and opponents countered that it did not reduce tooth decay and could lead to a wide range of harmful side effects, including cancer. The Shreveport Pure Water Association then announced at the meeting that it had enough signatures to force a referendum, which was indeed the case two weeks later when their petitions were filed.

The debate really heated up now, with a barrage of newspaper ads and a telephone campaign by the Shreveport Pure Water Association. These efforts were resisted by several pro-fluoridation groups, with the local dental and medical associations laboriously attempting to refute on a point-by-point basis the charges that fluoridation was a health hazard. Among the others strongly supporting fluoridation were Citizens for Fluoridation, both local major newspapers, and Commissioner Guin, who was apparently unchastened by the uproar. To add to the confusion, the wording of the referendum required that you cast a "No" vote if you were for fluoridation and vice versa if against.

The election was held in November 1977, and the vote to ban fluoridation failed, 53.6% to 46.4%. The massive, well-directed anti-fluoridation campaign was ultimately unsuccessful, though it did reduce support amongst Shreveporters from the 70% level that polls said existed in early 1977. Acquisition and installation of the necessary equipment ran into some delays, but fluoride treatment finally became operational in mid-1980, which was coincidentally the same time that the classic steam pumping equipment at the historic McNeil Street Pumping Station was retired.

Fun Money

September 5 was Shreveport Water Works Museum night at Parish Taceaux in downtown Shreveport. In an encore event following another one on May 2, the restaurant offered to donate to the museum a percentage of the bill of any customer who said they “were there for SWWM”. What a good deal! An offer to come eat gourmet tacos, browse a killer margarita menu, and make money for SWWM all at the same time didn’t take much thought before saying “Sure!”. The first fundraiser evening in May was busy-busy at the restaurant and brought in almost \$200 for the museum. Results for the one in September are still being tabulated. Thank you very much to Beaux Hays and the team at Parish Taceaux for their generous support!



“Smile” When You Shop

This “news” has already been in a previous newsletter, but as a reminder, don’t forget to do your Amazon shopping on smile.amazon.com. If you will register on Amazon Smile as a supporter of McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society, then they will donate ½% of your purchase total to MSPSPS every time you shop from then on, and it doesn’t cost you anything extra. Just log on to smile.amazon.com and your donation will happen automatically without re-registering, and if you forget to use Smile, Amazon will sometimes remind you! Since friends of MSPSPS started using Smile, Amazon has sent checks totaling \$75. Nationwide, Amazon has donated more than \$89 million to various charities. So all you Amazon shoppers don’t forget to register; this is even easier than eating at Parish Taceaux on Shreveport Water Works Museum night (but maybe not as much fun!).

Summer Time

After a busy, busy spring, the summer season passed somewhat uneventfully at the Shreveport Water Works Museum. No party rentals, or museum events, or other big hiccups, just LOTS of visitors from all over the place. Visitor traffic so far during 2018 has shot up over 40% from last year, and this year is sure to be the best yet attendance-wise. There was one minor challenge when our veteran docent Kevin took a summer vacation and the museum’s volunteer tour guides were once more called on to fill in and avoid disappointing visitors. Quite a few of the museum’s visitors are from out of town and only have one shot at seeing the one-of-a-kind water works, so a locked gate is a real bummer for them. Thank you to Maria Schmelz, Randall Palmer, Charlie Johnson, Jeff Cornelius, Paul Williams, and Liz Swaine for helping out.

With no events or fundraising activities during the season but with the usual ongoing bills arriving in the mail, the Preservation Society’s bank balance inched down after the boost earlier from Give For Good. Although it’s not enough to “live on”, many visitors do thoughtfully leave a donation, so more visitors helps in that way.

We Can Be Rented

The old “ozone room” that has been remodeled into a meeting space can be rented for parties, meetings, lunches, or whatever (we’ve had a wedding reception or two there). This is in the “modern” office building, so is

heated, cooled, and carpeted and offers about 1500 square feet of elbow room with a big screen TV and video projector if you want to use that. Folding tables and chairs are also available with seating for 100+. The room can be rented both during regular museum hours or after hours at a cost that varies depending on when and how long you want it. Touring the museum while you're there can be done at no extra charge! Call 318-221-3388 to inquire, or use the email option on our web site, www.shreveportwaterworks.org.

Our Handy Web Site

Another reminder, our web site is not only a great source of information about things like museum hours, but can be used to make a donation (important!), or to become a member (even more important!), or to purchase a museum souvenir. If you want a souvenir, just use the "donate" button, enter the cost of your item, and include an instruction saying what you want. There are real people on this end to figure it out, not a computer like on Amazon. Here are some of the items for sale (add \$4 for shipping):

- \$14 T-shirts (red, navy, forest green, or gray)
- \$10 "Clean Water" (DVD video story of the history of Shreveport's water)
- \$16 [A Cardinal Necessity](#) (a history of Shreveport's water supply and a great read!)
- \$10 Kitchen towel embroidered with SWWM name and graphic
- \$30 Wooden pen hand made from a piece of the old roof on the laboratory building. A real keepsake!

Here Come the Guest Speakers

The museum will soon be launching a periodic program of speakers on-site that we hope will be entertaining, informative, attract new friends, and raise a little bit of money to operate the museum all at the same time. Many of the subjects will be linked to water in some way, like a discussion of fires and firefighting in Shreveport (helps to have water when trying to put out a fire!). Details on when, what, and how much are being worked out as we go to press and will be published as soon as possible.

VOLUNTEER HELPERS NEEDED

The Shreveport Water Works Museum is situated on 6 acres in a 16,000 square foot building that is more than 100 years old in most areas. As such, it seems there is never a shortage of chores that need attention but don't get any because there isn't any "staff" around to take care of it (staff is expensive). If you're a bit of a handyman or just have a little extra elbow grease, we'd like to hear from you. We have broken window panes, peeling paint, overgrown brush, bad light fixtures, dirty windows, and the list goes on, that would love to see you! You can come out as you have time or we can take names and group you up with other like-minded helpers. Something that can be more fun is learning to be a tour guide. When we have large groups (usually from schools), we need multiple guides so the large group can be divided up for a better tour. Training is available and you will be an "expert" who knows a lot more than the average visitor in no time.

If you're interested, call the museum at 318-221-3388 or use the email link provided on our web site, www.shreveportwaterworks.org.

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 71163. Checks payable to MSPSPS
Donations can be made online at www.shreveportwaterworks.org