



THE FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

The Newsletter of the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society

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Repair Work Makes Progress

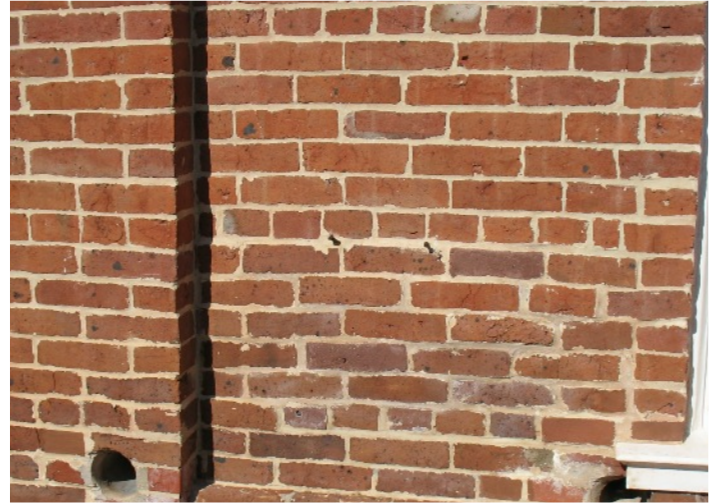
All the recent newsletter issues have reported the progress on repairs being made with money from the grant windfall in 2014. In this issue, it is terrific to be able to report that much of the work has been completed, with only one major project still to go. Here's a recap of what has been done during the most recent quarter:

Pumphouse Repointing

Repointing the masonry on the exterior of the south wall of the pumphouse was finished in December by the Thomas



Close-up view of wall "before"



Close-up view of wall "after"



Overview of repointed south wall of pumphouse

& Parker Waterproofing Company of Shreveport. The wall was in sad condition before, but looks great now. The mortar joints are once again tight to keep out water, but don't look "new" and blend right in with the historic character of the building.

This wall was the area most in need of work, but all of the pre-1921 pumphouse mortar needs attention, and we have at least twice as much exterior wall still to do when possible as was just finished.

Most of the brick repair work was funded by a \$45,000 grant from the Community Foundation of North Louisiana plus supplemental assistance by the Secretary of State's office. The Preservation Society is very grateful to both organizations.

Chimney Repairs

The chimney work was started and finished in February and was a critical project that those of us with the Preservation Society were anxiously awaiting. The State hired Gerard Chimney Company from St. Louis to work on the 100-foot-tall structure that dates from 1900.

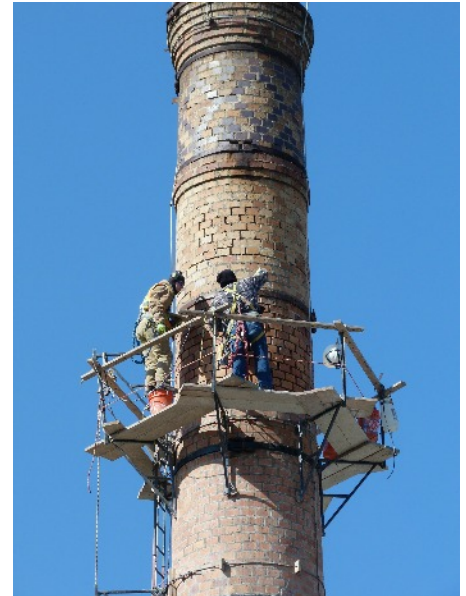
Gerard specializes in repairing old brick chimneys and made quick work of our job under the direction of their field superintendent Trinity Griffin. Trinity said our chimney was “just a small one”, but he looked pretty small himself when he was at the top of our 100-foot stack. To gain access to the tall chimney, an ingenious movable scaffold was used that was cinched around the stack with turnbuckles, then loosened and moved upward a piece at the time to a new work position. It looked kind of scary, but Trinity assured that it was “perfectly safe” as they were always tied off with a harness and rope to a secure point.

Overall, the chimney was found to be in good structural condition but the mortar was in serious need of repointing with many deeply open joints. The Gerard crew repointed 100% of the mortar joints instead of the 50% that they had estimated before beginning work, refurbished the lightning protection, installed a new rain cap at



Gerard crew at work on Adolphus-Custodis chimney

the top of the stack, and replaced the old concrete “water table” that joins the round stack and the square base. Trinity’s professional opinion is that our refurbished chimney will be good for another 100 years before they need to come back, although I’m sure he wouldn’t have minded staying a bit longer in Shreveport because his next job was in Minneapolis where the wind chill was in the negative digits at the time.



When workers reached the top a new concrete raincap was poured



New concrete water table installed at junction of round stack and square base replacing old broken one

Water Tank Repainting

The completion of the chimney job freed matching grant money that will be used to repair and repaint the elevated water tank. The bids for this job came in below budget estimates for a change, which was a huge relief since we were worried about not having enough money. Work on this project will begin soon now that the wintry bad weather is abating. There should even be a little money left over after the water tank work to do another small repair job somewhere that the Board of Directors is still thinking about selecting. Another restoration project that led the way but is worth remembering is that repainting the lime storage silo was completed one year ago. This job really spruced up the view from the parking lot.



Money Woes Hit Again

The State's budget troubles are impacting museums again because of a \$61 million spending reduction ordered by the Governor's office for the current fiscal year ending June 30.

As a result of cutbacks in 2011, there has only been one part-time State employee at the Shreveport Water Works Museum who operates the SWWM three days per week, but for the past two years the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society has been refunding the State the payroll for a second part-time employee for two more days for a total of five days per week. Due to the latest cutback, the Secretary of State has directed all of the museums in his department, including SWWM, to reduce operating hours to one day per week beginning April 13. (Louisiana State Exhibit Museum in Shreveport and Old State Capitol in Baton Rouge are exceptions with an allocation of three days per week.) The Preservation Society intends to continue paying for two more days, to allow the museum to be open three days each week. Before 2011, the museum was open six days per week totally at State expense.

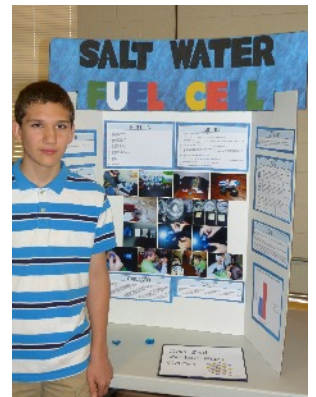
To implement the reductions in the museum department, Secretary of State Tom Schedler has directed that every one of his museum employees statewide be laid off on April 10, and then only some will be hired back on April 13 as part-time workers to keep the museums open, albeit just barely. This draconian edict will clearly severely damage the museum program. The State anticipates an even larger \$1.6 billion shortfall in the fiscal year beginning July 1 (total State budget is about \$25 billion), so we're not sure what will happen then.

This situation has recently resulted in articles in the newspaper, with some legislators publicly taking the position that museums aren't as important as saving higher education, aid for the needy, and so forth that also face being cut severely next year. However, that premise is a false one, as that is not really the choice to be made, simply because the museum budget is so small. The total budget for all of Secretary of State's museums was only \$3.5 million. So, if they were ALL 100% closed with the resultant wrecking of the hard won museum program and the forfeit of the history and culture that they preserve, the State is STILL faced with almost exactly the same financial problem in funding higher education and other priorities as in the first place. Closing museums doesn't even begin to save education or anything else.

Legislators are facing a tough job, and axing the museum program may very well happen if they don't hear protests from the public. I hope all of you reading this will take the time to contact one or more legislators (a roster with contact information can be found online at www.legis.la.gov). The message can be a simple one: "Our museums like the Shreveport Water Works Museum are important. Please do not try to balance the state budget on the backs of the museums. It won't work and we'll lose an important part of our community." As usual, the news coverage did not mention SWWM by name along with other museums, so get that in there! Of course, the most effective contact with a legislator is from a constituent, but they do respond to all public input, so those of you living elsewhere can still help by writing/calling/emailing to demonstrate there is widespread support. Your help can make a difference if you can get in touch before April 15 when the Legislature convenes.

Science Fair Returns

The local home school association used the museum's meeting room recently for their science fair after their inaugural event at our place last year. There were several projects on display and about 50 participants and spectators who took part. One of the exhibits wondered "which type of paper airplane will fly the farthest?" and this predictably provoked a blizzard of airplane "research" by attendees. Congratulations to all the students and thanks to home school mom Sharron Foster for coordinating the science fair for her group.



Jericho Litwiler with his 1st place fuel cell project. Brother Jace's project also won a 1st place.

BOARD NEWS

The annual meeting of the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society took place in February to elect directors to the board. Directors George Bakowski, James Mohr, and James Van Hook finished serving their terms in office, and all volunteered to be reelected to another three-year term. The entire roster of the board now consists of Jeff Little, Conway Link, Paul Williams, Marilyn Joiner, George Bakowski, James Mohr, James Van Hook, and director emeritus Larry LaBorde. The board elected officers for 2015 as follows: Conway Link – President, Marilyn Joiner – Vice President, Jeff Little – Secretary, Paul Williams – Treasurer, and Dale Ward – Executive Director. Thank you very much to all these individuals for generously donating their time and talent to guide the affairs of the Preservation Society.

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.