Get Ready For Railroad Day

For the last couple of years we’ve been having fun at SWWM with events (like the Birthday Party in 2018) that have food trucks for lunch, music, and a variety of activities. Well, get ready for some more event fun with Railroad Day at the Museum Sunday afternoon May 3.

The Shreveport Water Works Museum is a doubleheader that also is home to the Shreveport Railroad Museum, and railroads will the star of the show on May 3.

Railroads have played a starring role (and still do) of their own in the life of this area and here’s a chance to find out all about it. Not only that, newsletter readers know that the Foundation for the Union Pacific Railroad has been a generous donor of money we’ve used on conserving the old pumphouse, so we’re making Union Pacific a special guest for Railroad Day to thank them for their support.

Things to do for the day will include a special model railroad exhibit, a series of speakers on railroad themes, a small marketplace with items you’re not likely to find anywhere else, music, a couple of food trucks for lunch and snacks, and tours of the SWWM itself (usually the most popular thing to do). Plans are still coming together, so stay in touch via Facebook or our website for any late-breaking updates.

So, here’s another date for your calendar (besides Give For Good): Sunday May 3, 11:30a to 3:30p.

Give For Good Is Coming

What’s Give For Good? That’s easy: it is North Louisiana's largest day of giving, and it has become the second largest source of money each year that the Preservation Society uses to operate Shreveport Water Works Museum, surpassed only by the direct donations received from members.

The event was established in 2014 by Community Foundation of North Louisiana, and since then has raised over $10 million for the community! Give For Good allows both locals and potential donors from elsewhere to discover and engage with nonprofit organizations and make a contribution to causes they feel strongly about. Whether they give $10 or $10,000, they have a hand in transforming the local community.

In 2019, Give For Good garnered over $1.8 million for more than 200 area nonprofits. Those funds came from 4,251 donors representing 46 different states. That means that people from across the country are coming together to fund important initiatives in North Louisiana. As a part of this big picture, 42 donors gave the Preservation Society almost $7,400, including almost $1,000 of partial matching from the “Lagniappe Fund” established by the Community Foundation. We hope that you’ll be one of the thousands of generous donors from all around America that join in supporting local causes and PARTICULARLY the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society!

So, how can you get involved? Mark your calendar for May 5, 2020! When the day arrives, just “search” for McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society or Shreveport Water Works Museum on the Give For Good website (giveforgoodnla.org) and follow the directions to make a donation. Note that the program is online only and runs midnight to midnight on May 5. The website is also a handy way to keep track of how things are going as the day moves along. If you won’t be available May 5, or if you don’t want to forget, you can make a donation beginning April 21, but it won’t be posted until May 5.

Remember: Tuesday May 5!
Preservation Society News

February 10 was the date for the annual meeting of the Preservation Society membership, which is when directors are elected to serve on the Board. The terms of Jeff Little, Stacy Brown, Jeff Cornelius, and Liz Swaine expired coincident with the meeting, and all generously volunteered to reenlist and continue donating their valuable time with another 3-year term.

Thank you very, very much to all these folks for tending to the affairs of the Preservation Society and keeping Shreveport Water Works Museum open for all.

Another very important happening at the meeting was extending a well-deserved thank you to a recently retired, long-serving board member and Preservation Society member James Mohr. James has generously supported the work at the old water plant for many years with his time, expertise, and money, so the board organized a small luncheon (delicious, thank you Liz Swaine!) and invited James and his wife Margaret as special guests. Afterwards, the board presented James with a handsome framed collectible print of a pumphouse scene as a token of our gratitude for his service. The preservation of the amazing historic old water plant and existence of the Shreveport Water Works Museum would not be possible without James Mohr and others like him. Thank you!

Railroad Day will be coming soon at SWWM, so here’s a railroad story for you:

Everybody knows that the Panama Canal is an engineering masterpiece built by America at the instigation of President Theodore Roosevelt. Not as many know that the canal was first a failed undertaking started by a French corporation more than twenty years earlier and that the U.S. project got off to a bad start with an ineffective chief engineer before being turned around by a railroad guy named John Stevens. Stevens was vice president of construction for Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad when he was selected as the replacement chief engineer by Roosevelt.

Stevens got the tropical malaria and yellow fever under control that was decimating the work force, argued persuasively for the lock-and-dam design we see today, and designed an innovative excavating concept built around intensive use of railroads to haul the dirt away. Stevens was only on the job from 1905 to 1907 before resigning, which incensed Roosevelt, who turned then to an army Corp of Engineers officer who couldn’t quit! Stevens’ successor, George Goethals, usually receives credit as the builder of the canal, but he freely conceded that he stood on the shoulders of railroader John Stevens.

Stevens put to work a fleet of several hundred steam locomotives day and night hauling away enormous quantities of spoil as the steam shovels chewed through the route from sea to sea. Most of these engines are long gone, but did you know that Shreveport has one of the locomotives that helped create the mightiest engineering work ever to that point in history? It’s sitting quietly at Ford Park gradually falling victim to the elements and is named “D&R No. 10”. 

John Stevens at work in his office in 1905
The engine was built in 1907 by American Locomotive Company in Patterson New Jersey for the Panama Canal Commission and sent to Panama, where it labored for seven years until the canal was completed in 1914. After that it was purchased by a railroad equipment dealer in New Orleans and resold to the Dardanelle & Russellville Railroad Company in Dardanelle Arkansas. This railroad used it until diesels pushed their steam locomotives into retirement in the early 1950’s.

In 1956, Charles Kramer of Arkansas Louisiana Gas Company in Shreveport (later merged with Centerpoint) suggested acquiring a steam locomotive for public display as an example of a fast-disappearing but long-familiar technology. The Civitans service club picked up the idea and ran with it and created a highly visi-

ble and widely supported public effort that resulted in moving D&R No. 10 (donated by the railroad) from Dardanelle to a new home in Ford Park. One of the engineers supervising the logistics of trucking the locomotive and tender (heavy!) from the rail siding to Ford Park included none other than our own James Mohr. The big day arrived for ribbon-cutting and celebrating the new display on September 30, 1957.

Years passed, usage of Ford Park gradually declined, and today the massive locomotive is largely forgotten. It has amazing historic credentials as a rare survivor of the Panama Canal construction as well as being a survivor from the steam powered transportation era. It is a remarkable thing that we have it here in Shreveport. There is another rare survivor from the age of steam with a remarkable history here in Shreveport called the Shreveport Water Works Museum! Wouldn’t it be neat to have the locomotive at SWWM?

DONOR HONOR ROLL

The Preservation Society loves its donors that are keeping the SWWM going and the site fixed up. Last year we mounted a special sign in the museum to honor everyone contributing more than $100, and if that includes you, almost 6,000 people have seen your name and been grateful for your support. The layout on the right is an update for 2019-2020 that will soon be on site to honor the latest round of donors. Be sure to come by to have a look for yourself! (We love to brag on donors, but if you want your gift to be anonymous, just let us know.)

Special Gifts

Renee Rodi and Donna Mohr have recently made gifts in honor of their father, James Mohr (already mentioned multiple times in this edition!). Thank you very much for remembering your Dad at one of his favorite places!

Peggy and Rory Wisner have made a memorial gift for Peggy’s father, Jim Nuttall. Jim of course, was a wonderful supporter of our historic old water plant who is still greatly missed.
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

Or, donations can be made online at www.shreveportwaterworks.org