

# THE FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

The Newsletter of the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society

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Spring 2021

## Preservation Society News

The annual meeting of the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society took place on February 15 to vote on seating directors on the board. The terms of directors George Bakowski, David Kunz, and James Van Hook were expiring and all agreed to be nominated and elected to a new 3-year term. Director Jeff Cornelius had resigned last year due to his move to Texas, and David Burroughs was elected to a new 3-year term as well. Thank you very, very much to all these gentlemen for their time and wisdom in guiding the affairs of the Preservation Society. Thank you also to other board members Jeff Little, Liz Swaine, Stacy Brown, John Atkins, Conway Link, Paul Williams, Marilyn Joiner, and Nettie Brown for continuing their service.

Following the membership meeting, the board reelected its current officers for the coming year, who are Conway Link President, Marilyn Joiner Vice President, Liz Swaine Secretary, and Paul Williams Treasurer. (P.S. If you happen to be new and not familiar with the organization, the Preservation Society is the nonprofit organization [22 years young and counting!] that operates the Shreveport Water Works Museum under a contract with the City of Shreveport.)

## More News

Anybody who lives anywhere even remotely close to the museum's Shreveport location knows that the area was paralyzed by a fluke late-season snow/ice storm for an entire week in February. A snowfall of 4-6" locally was followed two days later by more than an inch of sleet and freezing rain with temperatures staying well below freezing the entire time. The event was highly unusual but not completely unprecedented, so the 134 years-old pumphouse has seen it before. So, how did the site fare? Pretty well, but not surprisingly, we were closed for the week and nobody slid up to the gate to visit, not even our dedicated tour guide Kevin to hang out the "Closed" sign! There was some damage to building gutters from the sheer weight of the accumulated ice and a few windows were knocked out by falling ice chunks. Nothing to compare to the collapsed awnings, carports, and such elsewhere around town, though.

Calendar year 2021 has gotten off to a rough start, but 2020 was definitely the memorable one, but for a lot of wrong reasons. Visitors to the museum plummeted to only 2204, which was not a record low, but was the smallest since way back in 2010. (Someone who shall remain nameless said he was surprised there were that many!) Showing the site to amazed visitors is what we do for fun at Shreveport Water Works Museum, so the fun quotient was pretty low as a result. Also, visitors usually leave donations and buy souvenirs, so that income was missing, too.

Thanks to continued support from the museum's friends (see story pg. 2), a timely late-year grant from a local foundation, and cutting back on any expense that wasn't nailed down, we actually finished the year without a budget deficit. But a new year is underway and we've got to do it all over again with the virus impact still unfolding. So, read on to the next story:.....



*Twisted & hanging gutter knocked loose by ice.*

# Give For Good Is Coming

The annual membership donations solicited each year in the December newsletter bring in the biggest chunk of money used by the Preservation Society, but this income is now nearly matched by the Give For Good fundraiser in recent years.. Both of these sources have gotten even more crucial in the face of the virus crunch. (Um, need something extra worthwhile to do with your “stimulus” check?!!)

The Give For Good event was established in 2014 by Community Foundation of North Louisiana, and since then has raised almost \$12 million for the community. In 2020, 38 donors gave the Preservation Society over \$6,400 plus \$1,350 of partial matching received from 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 4, 2021! When the day arrives, just “search” online for McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society or Shreveport Water Works Museum on the Give For Good website ([giveforgoodnla.org](http://giveforgoodnla.org)) and follow the directions to make a donation. Note that the program is online only and runs midnight to midnight on May 4. 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 4, or if you don't want to forget, you can make a donation before then beginning April 20, but it won't be posted until May 4. **Remember: Tuesday May 4!**

## DONOR HONOR ROLL

The Preservation Society is very....no, *extremely* grateful for all the donors who have been helping SWWM and preserving a wonderful historic site. As a way to brag on friends and provide a little public “thank you”, for the last couple of years we've had an exhibit in the museum that lists everyone who has contributed \$100 or more for the most recent year. The layout nearby is an update for 2020-2021 that will soon be installed to honor the latest round of donors. There's still room for more names if yours isn't on there and you'd like for it to be. Be sure to come by and have a look at the real thing! (But, if you want your gift to be anonymous, just let us know.)

## Special Gifts

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.

## McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society 2020-21 Honor Roll of Members and Donors

### Benefactor

*\$500 & Up*

Alvin Childs	Robert Hopkins	W. Conway Link
Carol Mahoney	Kristi & Rick Michael	Cathy & Dale Ward
City of Shreveport	Donald Wiener	William B. Wiener, Jr.
Peggy & Rory Wisner for Jim Nuttall	Alta & John Franks Foundation	Paul Williams

### Legacy

*\$250 to \$499*

Marcia & Bob Basinger	Suzanne & Frank Bright	Richard Eglin	Richard Harrelson
Mary & Frank Hughes	Marilyn & Gary Joiner	Christopher Kinsey	Malcolm Murchison
Donna Mohr	James & Margaret Mohr	Liz Swaine	Rachel & Robert Penn
Linda & Keith Tonnies	Gene Winegeart		

### Family Premium

*\$100 to \$249*

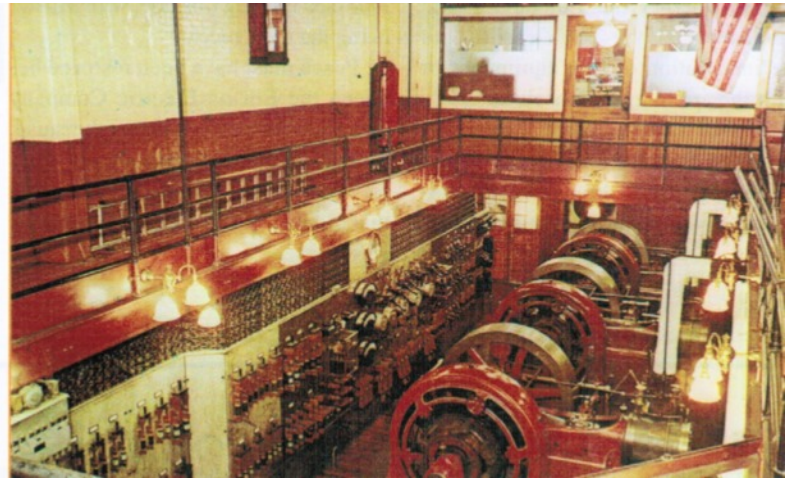
George Bakowski	Stacy Brown	Nettie Brown	John Cariere	Lincoln Coleman III
Paul Cooper	Pearla Despot	Michael Falls	William Heuberger	Charles Johnson
Sandy Jones	David Kunz	Larry LaBorde	Earl Lindanger, Jr.	Jeffrey Little
David Lohrey	Barbara & Brad McGuire	Pamela McPherson	Conrad Milster	Malcolm Murchison
David Nelson	Becky Nuttall	Mark & Shirlee Owen	William Peatross	Howard Pelton
Renee Rodi	James Van Hook	Juanita Ward	Pamela Ward	Susan & Dennis Webb
George Woodzell				

## You Need to Meet:

Members of the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society come from a kaleidoscope of professions, hobbies, trades, and interests. All of them are united by the desire to see a unique historic site preserved that was distinguished by the application of steam technology for making water for the community. A member of the Preservation Society with an amazing and in-depth appreciation and understanding of historic steam technology from another unique historic site is Mr. Conrad Milster.

Conrad is a long-time chief engineer and caretaker of a beautiful artifact of the steam era, the electric power plant at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, which is a private college opened in 1887 for “practical” training of students. During the first years of the college, the boilers and generators came and went until 1900, when three new steam-engine-driven generators were installed that are still in place and operational, but not used, today. The details of the evolution of the boiler and generator plant through the years would more than fill up the pages of this entire newsletter so must be skipped, but today even though the electric generators have been retired, the boiler plant continues to supply steam and hot water to the campus.

Here’s what author Thomas Blalock had to say in an article written for an Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) magazine: “In 1977, the power plant was designated a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. To



*The engine room of Pratt's power plant.  
(Photo courtesy of Conrad Milster)*

preservation and maintenance of the facility, Milster himself should have been included in the landmark designation.” Blalock also pointed out that Milster is a masterful collector of vintage electrical devices and had installed several antique meters to monitor the electrical system while it was being used.

Blalock might have mentioned additionally that Conrad is a serious collector of steam whistles, including the whistle from the famed passenger liner Normandie that he rescued from the scrap yard at the last minute. Conrad is known for setting up a temporary steam whistle installation outside at the Institute to serenade onlookers with a whistle concert annually on New Year’s Eve.

A few years ago at Shreveport Water Works Museum we moved one of the plant’s steam whistles from its spot above the roof of the old high service pump room and set it up on the floor to blow with compressed air. To do this, we consulted with Conrad to get some tips on how to adjust the whistle to best make it work, which it did. Blowing the whistle is always a highlight of a visit to SWWM nowadays. Thanks Conrad!

Another nifty thing that Conrad did just for fun was build the snazzy-looking boiler pictured nearby. He built it in the early 1960’s and spruced it up for an official portrait in 2004. There are numerous steam engines of all sizes at SWWM but no working boiler to furnish steam to run them. Too bad Mr. Milster lives so far away!



*View of Conrad Milster's “homemade” boiler.  
(Photo courtesy of Conrad Milster)*

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## **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](http://www.shreveportwaterworks.org)