



TEXAS MOVER



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The Petra Vela
Kenedy House
Move
1870

And the rest of the
story on Page 17.



The World's Oldest and Largest Recycling Industry!

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The La Belle History and Texas Connection at 2017 Conference

In the summer of 1684, La Salle left Rochefort, France with four hundred (400) colonists and sailors on the journey to the Mississippi River. The expedition set sail in four ships: the King's warship, *Le Joly*; a large glute carrying supplies, *l'Aimable*; a barque longue name *La Belle*; and a small ketch, *Le Saint-Francois*.

The voyage was plagued by misfortune from the very beginning. Pirates captured *Le Saint-Francois* during a stop in the Caribbean and valuable supplies were lost. Use of a faulty map of North America made by La Salle's mapmaker, Jean-Baptiste Louis Franquelin, proved a tragic mistake, as La Salle bypassed the Mississippi entirely and ended up in early 1685 along the Texas coast, deep in Spanish territory. LaSalle had no idea he had missed his river and instead thought that today's Matagorda Bay was part of the Mississippi delta. A short time later, he lost *L'Aimable*, and *Le Joly* sailed back to France. This left La Salle with only one ship, *La Belle* as the expedition's last lifeline to sail to France for help.

Confident that the Mississippi River lay somewhere near his location on the Texas coast, La Salle loaded all of the remaining supplies into *La Belle* and ordered the ship to sail as far northeast as possible into Matagorda Bay. From there, La Salle would set out by land searching for his river. Once he found the Mississippi, he would have *La Belle* sail to the river and he would set up the King's Gulf Coast colony. But, as *La Belle* lay anchored in the bay awaiting La Salle's orders to proceed to the Mississippi, a catastrophic storm blew in during February 1686. *La Belle* wrecked and sank to the bottom of Matagorda Bay, where she lay entombed for three centuries in a watery grave.



LaBelle



Robert de La Salle

The La Belle History and Texas

In 1995, the Texas Historical Commission found the remains of La Belle and excavated the ship in 1996-97. Over 1.6 million artifacts were found including the bottom third of the hull, which was dismantled into over 350 individual timbers. The large size and the vast quantity of hull wood presented a huge logistical problem for transporting the material to the Conservation Research Laboratory at Texas A&M University in College Station where preservation treatment was planned. This would require the very fragile timbers to travel more than 150 miles by road.

John and Judy Clegg provided two trucks with trailers to move some of the items to A&M.

Ultimately the preservation of the hull took 17 years, and in 2014 the goal was to reassemble the treated timbers at the Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin-the final home for La Belle. But this would require another 100 mile movement of the ship's timbers.

John and Judy volunteered to provide their big rig to move the long preserved components to the Bullock museum in Austin. All of these parts were positioned in a special assembly area within the museum. After several months of assembly work. La Belle was ready to move to its final resting place in the center of the museum. Planning and design of the final move started months earlier. John Clegg came up with a design and it was presented to La Belle team which included the A&M head conservator, Peter Fix, Guest Curator, Jim Brueth, Director of Special Projects, Dave Denny, and Museum Executive Director, Victoria Ramirez.

The job was to fabricate a lifting system that would raise La Belle and install some kind of wheels. We needed to roll La Belle about 200 feet including a 90 degree turn and pass through an opening that had been cut into a museum wall separating the assembly room from the main gallery area where La Belle would be positioned for the last time. La Belle is the centerpiece for the State Museum.

The design consists of 4" steel I-Beams, special steel end frames, 8" poly casters and 7,000 lb. manual hand crank jacks.

All of this rigging was fabricated by our sister company, Clegg Industries.

The Clegg team traveled to Austin in the early hours of May 21, 2015. When we arrived, all of the museum staff was waiting and La Belle was sitting on a lightweight steel support with 8" blocks under. Xxx?

Our rigging was unloaded and had to be moved on a freight elevator since La Belle was on the floor above the freight entrance.

We carefully slid our I-Beams under La Belle. We did not want to damage the carpet. The end fixtures were installed as well as our jacks.

We wanted La Belle to come up totally flat with no stress on any one point. We turned each jack to make contact with the steel backbone.

We now assigned one person to each of our 12 jacks.

In unison, we all cranked on the jacks. This reminded me of an ancient ship with oars and all the men are rowing together.

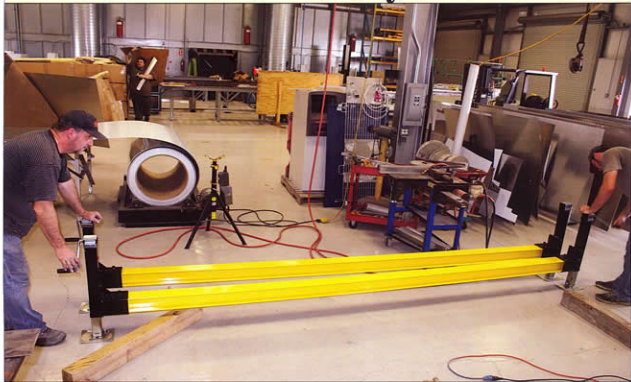
The La Belle History and Texas



Custom built lifting mechanism built by Clegg Industries -built specifically for the ship move.



The La Belle History and Texas



We soon had La Belle high enough to install our casters. As soon as the casters were installed, we lowered La Belle back down on the wheels. The jacks were now retracted. The next step was to clamp our I-Beams to the steel backbone. We did not want our I-Beams to flop over when we started rolling.

La Belle was now ready to move. We waited until 1:30 for the final move. All of the media folks wanted to be there.

As all folks were present, we had our 12 "pushers" in place and we slowly started rolling La Belle.

We made our 90 degree turn O.K. and lined up with our gap in the wall. We only had about 6" on each side. We glided through the gap and now all of the assembled crowd was able to see La Belle. It was very exciting. Cameras were rolling and the crowd was clapping and cheering.

As soon as we stopped on the designated "dime," La Belle would never move again.

We left the rigging in place for several weeks so the museum staff could make sure it was exactly in the correct position. It was!

All the rigging is now removed and the La Belle exhibit is open to the public.

Moving La Belle was one of the most interesting and rewarding structures I have moved. I thoroughly enjoyed working with all the dedicated staff and historians on the project. Texas is the great state it is thanks to the brave souls who followed LaSalle to the new world.

The La Belle History and Texas



Installing lifting beams





Loading cross member lifting jacks under La Bell support structure



Raising the ship to install the transport wheels

The La Belle History and Texas



The La Belle History and Texas



The La Belle History and Texas



Moving the ship to its final location



John Clegg leading the way

Now Resting at the Bob Bullock Museum in Austin Texas and was Moved by a TASM Member **John Clegg and Crew....**The "Labelle" now the 2nd most historic artifact next to the Alamo in Texas!



**Labelle in her final resting place at
The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum**



Clegg Services La Belle Moving Crew