



I was walking around the Shreveport Common area trying to decide on a subject when this one literally jumped out at me from the cornerstone of Central Art Station. I saw the familiar name of John McWilliams Ford there. I started looking for more information about him and discovered a great deal. John McWilliams Ford (he was my father's cousin) was the grandson of Shreve Town pioneer banker Capt. John Gordon McWilliams. I knew from family lore that the captain, lacking a son, had offered to leave all his possessions to him if he would drop the "Ford" surname and go by McWilliams. He declined the offer, and does not seem to have suffered any ill effects from doing so. He is the longest serving elected official ever from Shreveport when all his terms in various elected offices are tallied. He first served as a city alderman, a member of the parish police jury, a state legislator, and mayor of Shreveport, chaired the draft board during WWII, but is best remembered for his extensive time as city finance commissioner. In that capacity he brought the city out of debt during the great depression, and gave the city 35 years of a balanced budget and a scandal-free finance department. . During his tenure as Mayor he spearheaded many public improvements including the funding and building of the Central Fire Station and the Shreve Memorial Library. He was noted for being an extremely accessible public official, willing to talk with anyone, always had his door facing a public hallway and kept open, and insisted on answering his own phone. He was a well loved public figure and was a York and Scottish Rite Mason and Shriner, a past exalted ruler of Shreveport Lodge of Elks, and district deputy grand exalted ruler for the Northern District of Louisiana. . He is the person for whom Ford Park on Cross Lake is named, and his name appears on numerous building cornerstones throughout the downtown area. He was listed as one of the 100 most important people in Shreveport history in a Times article in 1999. I believe he is noteworthy due to setting a high standard for public service, and citizens today still benefit from efforts that he initiated. I can only hope to emulate his legacy that leaves a positive footprint on our city for years to come.