

KEOKUK UNION DEPOT ROOF RESTORATION PROJECT SUMMARY

The Keokuk Union Depot Foundation (KUDF), a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, and the Keokuk Union Depot Commission (KUDC), a city entity whose members are appointed by the Keokuk mayor, are planning to restore the Keokuk Union Depot to its original design, modernize the heating, plumbing and wiring, and improve the currently unused space. The KUDC and the KUDF jointly commissioned an extensive professional evaluation of the building and the costs involved in its restoration, known as an Historic Structure Report (HSR).

The Depot is architecturally and historically significant. Its restoration will preserve what is the single, most important, and visible, endangered building left in Keokuk. It will add an important element to the attraction of the riverfront. It will contribute to a revival of the image of Keokuk as a proud city that values its past and is working toward a better future. The restored roof will be a dramatic and important symbol of riverfront development that is visible to traffic crossing the bridge to and from Illinois, visitors on the Observation Deck, and barges and pleasure craft on the Mississippi River. The Eastern face of Keokuk will be an attraction, not an eyesore.

In brief, the roof restoration project consists of Phase 2 of the Depot's HSR. The estimated cost totals just under \$1 Million, including chimney and eave reconstruction that must be completed during this phase. The roof will be restored to its original beauty with red clay tiles, including restoring all of the ornamental details of the flowing roofline: the field, hip, and ridge tiles; the corner turrets and clock dormers; and copper gutters, leaders, pinnacles and finials. The central tower and chimney will be restored to their original height and details.

The original roof line and clay tile roofing are the most significant and crucial features to restore the elegant aesthetic massing of the Depot. The Keokuk Union Depot is one of the few remaining examples of John Wellborn Root's celebrated Romanesque Revival style of public architecture, a style pioneered by Henry Hobson Richardson of Boston. Keokuk is privileged to be among the few communities in the Midwest still to possess such a significant edifice designed by the renowned Chicago architectural firm of Burnham & Root, creators of the famed Chicago "White City" for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, and demonstrating the style and skill of John Wellborn Root himself.

The Keokuk Union Depot is recognized as architecturally significant by state and national historians. Ralph J. Christian, Historian, and Paula A. Mohr, Architectural Historian, of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, have attested to the significance of the Keokuk Union Depot as the best remaining example in Iowa of Root's skill as a designer of not only office buildings — such as the Rookery and the Monadnock buildings in Chicago — but also of railroad stations of the period. Richard Guy Wilson, Chair Department of Architectural History at the University of Virginia has stated that the Depot "is a very important remnant of a part of American history when the train station was one of the centers of town life. These are fast disappearing. Finally as design, it is without a doubt one of the top buildings in Iowa from the 19th century and should be saved and restored." Tim Samuelson, Cultural Historian, City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, has asserted his opinion that the Keokuk Union Depot is the best of the Burnham & Root railroad stations.

Through the roof restoration phase, we will use the Depot solely as an event center. This use began in 2013 after volunteers completed cleaning and repairs to make the building usable. Restoring the roof will make it possible to confidently continue and expand the event center usage without concern for structural problems caused by water leaks. It will also make the Depot a much more desirable venue.

We have already entered into discussions with the newly-formed and privately-owned Lake Cooper Event Center, formerly the Keokuk Country Club, to work as a team to expand the use of the Depot as an additional venue for weddings, receptions, class reunions, and business meetings which require more than one site for planned activities. The Lake Cooper Event Center has long been the primary, if not sole, upscale venue for such events.

The schedule for the roof project will depend upon the time needed to raise funds to earn the Jeffris grant. We expect to announce the formal capital campaign in September of 2014. We hope to raise the matching funds by the 125th anniversary of the opening of the Depot, July 1, 2016. In any event, it will be no later than September 30, 2017. Work on the actual restoration of the roof will begin soon after the matching funds are raised and will probably take approximately one year to complete.

Although work on the Depot could end successfully with the roof project followed by continuing work by many volunteers, the HSR contemplates additional future restoration and improvements that will expand the uses and efficiency of the entire Depot building. These plans include further improvements to the 2400 square foot event/banquet/conference room space (the original waiting room), a spacious catering kitchen (original baggage room), storage room for tables and chairs needed for the event center, manager's office/gift shop (former ticket booth), office space and other improvements in the down-river section, and a large storage/maintenance room (the original boiler room).

Later phases of the Depot's restoration and improvement will begin as soon as possible after the roof project is sufficiently complete. Additional Jeffris grants, as well as tax credits, will also be available for funding these future phases. If all the improvements contemplated in the HSR are completed, we expect the Depot to be fully restored and improved within ten years, and to be self-supporting throughout that time, except for the capital improvements.