

# Depot celebrates 125 years with open house Saturday

Open house from 9 a.m. to noon at depot features guest speaker, tour, announcement

## FOR THE DAILY GATE CITY

On Friday, the Keokuk Union Depot will be 125 years old, not subtracting any years for its second lease on life – recent renovations and cultural events.

To celebrate, the Keokuk Union Depot Foundation and the Keokuk Union Depot Commission will hold an open house at the building from 9



Smith

a.m. to noon Saturday to celebrate this historic event and announce exciting news about the depot's future, according to Janet Smith, president of the Keokuk Union Depot Foundation.

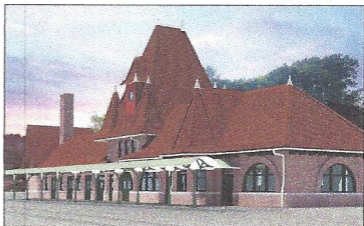


Vogel

Guest speaker will be Keokuk native Neal Vogel, principal of Restoric LLC, who is in charge

of the depot's roof restoration project.

Since the City of Keokuk acquired the depot in 2011, the structure has served as an event center, hosting weddings, reunions, graduation



COURTESY / MATTHEW MARTIN

**The Keokuk Union Depot Foundation's goal is to have the structure returned to its former glory. See a picture of the depot's glory days on Page 6.**

and anniversary parties, and business meetings for guests not only from Keokuk and Lee County, but also from Hancock and Clark counties.

A massive restoration project is well on its way to turning the depot back into the showcase that it was in 1891, but this time for 21st century use.

## HISTORY

Five railroads originally served Keokuk in the late 19th century, each using its own wooden sheds for passenger and freight customers.

The Keokuk Union Depot combined the passenger and express traffic from all the railroads and was owned by all the railroads.

The depot served railroad travelers and express ship-

pers until the end of passenger service to Keokuk in 1967.

A fire caused by lightning on July 8, 1937, damaged the central tower, but the tower was still in place with the original red clay tiles in 1949. Shortly afterward, the central tower was leveled, decreasing its height by 24 feet. The clay tiles were replaced by asphalt shingles, now decades beyond their useful lives.

The structure's use as an event center began in 2013 after volunteers completed cleaning and repairs to make the former main waiting room usable. Significant restoration of the waiting room had been done in the late 1980s. Much more extensive work has been planned and

## DEPOT: Keokuk Union Depot is being restored with state grants, Jeffris Family Foundation Grant, fundraising events

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started in the five years since the City of Keokuk acquired the depot.

### GRANTS, FUNDING

Recent grants from the local Questers organizations have funded the restoration of the oak paneling interior and doors and windows of the waiting room.

With the help of a \$56,600 Historical Resource Development Program grant from the State of Iowa in 2015, the depot commenced a portion of the roof restoration in the summer of 2015. The now-completed HRDP project consisted of restoring the chimney to its original height and restoring the eaves and brackets around the waiting room.

The HRDP project is a portion of the larger \$1 million roof restoration project for which the Keokuk Union Depot Foundation has received a Jeffris Family Foundation 2-for-1 challenge grant of \$333,000.

The KUDF must raise \$667,000 to receive the grant.

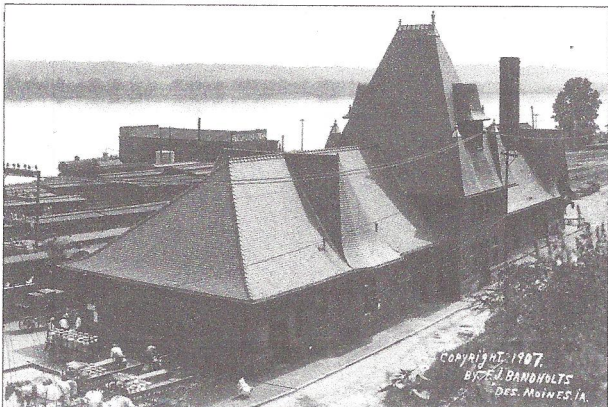
The Jeffris Family Foundation, based in Janesville, Wis., is dedicated to the historic preservation of significant architectural structures in small towns in the Midwest.

As of June 24, the KUDF had raised \$538,565 toward the \$667,000 Jeffris match leaving \$128,435 to be raised.

### TOWER HEIGHT TO BE RESTORED

The central tower will be restored to its original height. Red clay tiles similar to the original tiles (and manufactured by the same company) will be installed, and all of the ornamental details of the roof line will be restored, including the decorative ridge and hip tiles, corner turrets and dormers and the copper gutters, and hip pinnacles and finials.

The depot was designed and built in 1891 by the Chicago architect-



COURTESY / LIBRARY OF CONGRESS / FREDERICK BANDHOLTS

The Keokuk Union Depot was an important cog in the South Lee County transportation wheel, shipping and receiving goods for area industries, businesses and families. The depot also as a departure point for passenger rail service — including members of the armed forces.

tural firm Burnham and Root, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### ROOT BUILDING

It is one of the last

projects of John Well-born Root, who died at age 41 of pneumonia six months before the depot was completed.

The Keokuk Union Depot is one of the few

remaining examples of Root's celebrated Romanesque Revival style of public architecture, particularly railroad depots in the Midwest.

Burnham and Root

also designed the famed Chicago "White City" for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, as well as the Rookery and the Monadnock buildings in Chicago.