

Depot group gets \$333K grant

Grant match of \$667K must be raised by September 2017 for roofing project

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A \$333,000 grant awarded to the Keokuk Union Depot Foundation will allow the organization to put a new roof on the historic structure.

Janet Smith of the depot foundation received word Wednesday that the Jeffris Family Foundation of Janesville, Wis., had approved the depot group's grant application.

In order to earn the grant, the depot foundation must raise at least \$667,000 in matching gifts no later than Sept. 30, 2017. The foundation will seek contributions from donors

outside the community as well as local entities.

The depot group submitted to the Jeffris Family Foundation an historic structures report prepared by Neal Vogel, a Keokuk native and architectural preservationist who teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

"Neal has done a lot of what the construction superintendent would be doing later," said Bob Woodburn of the depot



Smith



MEGAN McNEILL / DAILY GATE CITY

Supporters of the Keokuk Union Depot Foundation lift a glass of champagne Wednesday to Debbie Marion, president of the depot commission. Marion led the charge to secure ownership of the depot for the City of Keokuk.

foundation. "He's laid a lot of good ground work."

The report contains 95 pages of text regarding the history and condition of the interior and exterior of the depot, followed by diagrams and photos.

"The first 34 pages are about the roof,

and that's the phase we're doing now," Smith said. "It's been very educational for me and everyone else working on the depot."

Putting a new roof on the depot will cost

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DEPOT: Roof restoration to feature red clay tiles, copper gutters, corner turrets and other ornamental details

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nearly \$1 million, according to Smith. Construction will begin when all the funds are in hand.

"The roof will be restored to its original beauty with red clay tiles ... (and) 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," according to a project summary from the depot foundation. "The central tower and chimney will be restored to their original height and details."

Built in 1891, the depot is one of the last surviving examples of Romanesque Revival-style architecture designed by John Wellborn Root of the Chicago firm Burnham and Root.

"We're hoping the renovation of this magnificent building will spur economic development on Keokuk's riverfront," Smith said.

ABOUT JEFFRIS FAMILY FOUNDATION

The Jeffris Family Foundation was established in 1979 by Bruce and Eleanor Jeffris and their son Tom. Bruce Jeffris came from a pioneer family that immigrated from Kentucky to Wisconsin in the 1840s. He joined the Parker Pen Company after World War I and was CEO when he retired in 1960.

The foundation serves small communities in eight Midwest states - Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota and Ohio. In the past 15 to 20 years, the foundation has focused on preserving historic structures in small communities, according to President Tom Jeffris. In that time, the foundation has supported 75 to 100 projects in the region it serves.

"We feel it's very important to preserve the past and communities' quality of life, and not demolish or significantly alter significant buildings," Tom Jeffris



COURTESY

ABOVE: The Keokuk Union Depot as shown in a 1907 postcard, had a gracefully sloping roof and plenty of ornamental features. BELOW: The depot roof today, although somewhat battered, retains some of its original lines but is devoid of ornament.



said. The depot foundation is one of five grant recipients this year, ac-

cording to Tom Jeffris. The Jeffris Family Foundation is governed by a three-member

board that only considers applications from organizations that have been invited to apply.

Board member Royce Yeater was on his way to a conference in Missouri last year when he contacted the State Historical Society of Iowa office in Des Moines and asked if there were any projects worth checking out on his way through Iowa. He learned about an ongoing restoration effort at the Keokuk Union Depot.

Yeater scheduled a tour of the depot and met several people involved in the project. In April of this year, the Jeffris board invited the depot foundation to apply for a grant.

"We look for projects that involve a significant historic resource," Yeater said. "The depot is both architecturally and culturally significant."

For more information about the Jeffris Family Foundation, go to www.jeffrisfoundation.org.

To learn more about the depot, go to www.keokukuniondepot.org or search for Keokuk Union Depot on Facebook.