

Hearthstone Historic House Museum  
[www.hearthstonemuseum.org](http://www.hearthstonemuseum.org)  
625 Prospect Avenue, Appleton WI 54911  
Telephone: 920-730-8204

## **Hearthstone Shining Bright after Exterior Restoration Project**

Hearthstone Historic House Museum is celebrating the completion of a three-year, top-down complete exterior restoration. Over 100 members, long-time supporters, supporters of the restoration project, as well as dignitaries from across the Fox Cities area will attend a private garden party event on August 28th to view the finished structure. While elements of the exterior have been restored and preserved over the years, this is the first time the entire exterior has been completed at the same time since the residence was built 139 years ago.

“We would not be able to undertake this breathtaking renewal of the museum’s exterior without the dedication and attention to detail of the artisans and craftsmen who did the work,” says George Schroeder, Hearthstone Executive Director. “And of course, it would have been utterly impossible without the overwhelming generosity and support of our community and beyond.”

Completing the project during the Covid epidemic made it more challenging. The restoration began in 2019 beginning with the dismantling and rebuilding of the four 25-foot, complex chimneys that adorn the roof of Hearthstone. This work was completed by Quality Building Restoration of Appleton, who have donated labor and materials on several other projects over the years. The additional historic brick to restore the chimneys was identical to that originally used on the house, and was repurposed from the site of a demolished building of the same era.

The chimneys were followed by installation of a new roof the same year. As a building on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, Hearthstone is held to U.S. National Park Service standards regarding authentic materials used in restoration. Some leeway was granted on the roof materials based on the necessity of ensuring its longevity. The previous cedar shingle roof was replaced with a high-tech stone-coated steel roofing system installed by JF Lopez Roofing of Fond du Lac. “Choosing the right roofing contractor was essential,” said Schroeder. “Not just any contractor could take on something this monumental. The work by Lopez was exceptional.”

The final phase of 2019 was the design and installation of a comprehensive rainwater control system, which utilizes a historic, large half circle profile for the gutters.

In year two, the detailed millwork was restored on the second and third stories, with all surfaces prepped, sealed, and painted. This was undertaken by CertaPro Painters® of NE Wisconsin and their historic restoration crew under the supervision of site manager Olvin Elvir.

When it came to reproducing some of the historic turnings and profiles in wood, a great contribution came from *Fox Valley Technical College Department of Wood Manufacturing Technology* under the direction of instructors Mark Lorge and Glenn Koerner. Hearthstone’s need to have original pieces of millwork replicated gave students real-world problems to solve. “It is truly amazing that 21st century technology can be used to reproduce 19th century woodworking and that the result is indistinguishable

from the original,” says Schroeder. “FVTC students were a marvelous resource that the trades can tap into for decades to come.”

Year-three saw the entire first floor millwork restored and painted, including the restoration of Hearthstone’s magnificent veranda and four exterior staircases, by the same private/public partnership of CertaPro and FVTC. Again, millwork labor was donated by the Fox Valley Technical College Department of Wood Manufacturing Technology under the direction of instructor Mark Lorge. “Mark found us by accident, and if it wasn’t for him and his students, the total cost for the millwork would have been astronomical,” said Thomas Weiland, Hearthstone Development Director. “Sometimes things just fall into place, but the appreciation we have for the work they did cannot be overstated.”

Financing for the three-year restoration came from a combination of grants and individual donations raised as part of Hearthstone’s “Shine Even Brighter” Project Campaign. The campaign was sparked by a \$100,000 anonymous gift. This was matched by \$100,000 given by the David L. and Rita E. Nelson Family Fund within the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region. Many other significant donations were received from various sources to help reach the required total to finance the project.

“We admire the effort of past generations for the work that they did to get us to this point,” said Weiland. “The way the house has been preserved with its original attributes over the last 139 years is nothing short of astounding, and the way the community *still* feels about Hearthstone is evident in the support we have received.”

In 2022, Hearthstone will undertake its next projects designed to boost the museum’s energy efficiency: 1) The replacement of the museum’s boiler that provides steam heat for the original radiators throughout the house, and 2) The restoring of its sixty-three historic interior windows. The residence’s storm windows are already being rebuilt by MJB Construction of Appleton. “Maintaining a historic residence of this size is an unending challenge,” said Schroeder. “But with a community like the Fox Cities behind you, you can accomplish anything.”

#### **ABOUT HEARTHSTONE:**

Friends of Hearthstone, Inc. is a , privately funded non-profit organization with the mission of preserving Hearthstone Historic House Museum and the contents within for the promotion of its unique place in history, architecture, innovation, and culture in the Fox Cities area to its members and all those in the State of Wisconsin.

Hearthstone Historic House Museum is a large, beautifully restored Queen Anne Victorian Style home built in 1882 by Henry J. Rogers, Superintendent of the Appleton Paper and Pulp Mill. On September 30, 1882, Hearthstone was the first house in the world to be lit by an Edison central hydroelectric power station. The house retains many unique, genuine features, including the original Thomas Edison electroliers and light switches. Appleton was one of the first three cities in the world to be lit by an Edison central power station, the other two being New York and London. This was all due to Mr. Rogers, who decided to invest in Edison’s power station in order to light two paper mills and his home. Since it became a museum in 1987, Hearthstone’s focus is to preserve the house and its artifacts to re-create a historical experience based on its heritage for the cultural enjoyment and educational benefit of the public through its many exhibits and educational programs.

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*Roof Installation in 2019.*



*Drone View of  
Hearthstone showing the  
new long-lasting roof and  
completed chimneys.*





*Completed Chimneys  
before new roof  
installment*

*Dramatic before and after of new millwork and paint on third story.*



For more pictures relating to this story, please contact [tweiland@hearthstonemuseum.org](mailto:tweiland@hearthstonemuseum.org)

