

# Lodge restored to past glory

By Jake Mosbach  
Herald Staff Writer

On the eastern bluff of Eagle Point Park in the northernmost area of Clinton sits a log-and-stone structure that has long been a landmark in the bi-state area. Its large, wide-open main hall and sweeping stone back porch offer perhaps the most scenic gathering place in the area. It's the Eagle Point Lodge, and now, it's in pristine condition.

That wasn't always the case, however.

But thanks to the efforts of a group of dedicated Clinton-area residents, the Lodge is more accommodating than it's ever been. The Clinton chapter of Rotary International is largely to thank for the renovation of the historic building. Even more, one person in the chapter is largely to thank for the fund-raising efforts for the project — Dee Willoughby.

Willoughby, owner of Fulton Corp. in Fulton, Illinois, spearheaded the campaign to return the Lodge to its former glory. Through various fund-raising methods, enough for the \$1.4 million project was taken in, and on June 28, Rotary and city officials held the ceremonial ribbon-cutting ceremony of the 'new' Eagle Point Lodge, officially completing the nearly six-month project. Groundbreaking took place Dec. 14, 2015.

"We really wanted to add value to the lodge," Willoughby said. "From the veranda to the foundation, we wanted to address the things that people could see, but also some of the things that they can't see. We were hoping to add many more years to the building."

The building itself already has many years in its past. An original Lodge structure was built in the park around the turn of the 20th Century. It eventually needed to be replaced.

Re-built in the 1930s as part of a Works Progress Administration project, the Lodge began to see more and more events take place within its walls. But as the decades passed, upkeep of the building fell by the wayside. Use of the Lodge, featuring one of the best views of the Mississippi River in Clinton, diminished.

"Over time, the Lodge just became under-loved," Willoughby said. "It became just a little place for people to hold meetings and things on the weekends. We wanted to make the building not just usable for 52 weeks a year, but 365 days a year."

So Willoughby and his



Rotary and city officials held a ceremonial ribbon-cutting ceremony of the Eagle Point Lodge, officially completing a nearly six-month project. JAKE MOSBACH/CLINTON HERALD

park, among other updates. But perhaps more important than the visible changes, the bowels of the building have also been improved.

The Lodge's septic system, as well as its structural foundation, were renovated in the process. Willoughby said it was only a matter of time before each one failed.

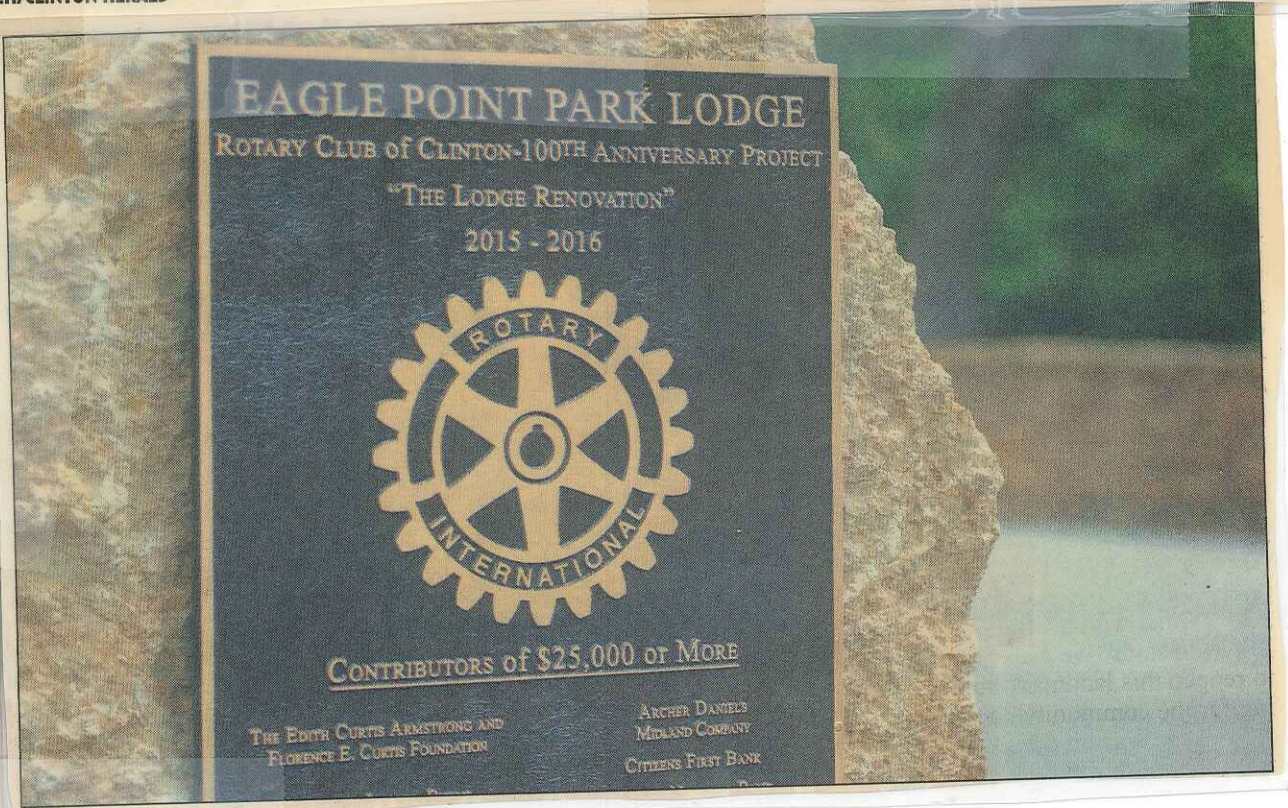
Initial cost estimates for the renovation were placed at approximately \$1 million. That goal was met in fall 2015, but Rotary members knew more funding would be needed to complete their vision of the Lodge.

So despite going nearly \$400,000 over original estimates, the aim of the project remained — to allow the building to be used year-round. Now that it can do that, Willoughby is confident that the Lodge will bring in more than enough revenue to justify the cost.

If the praise of Clinton Mayor Mark Vulich is any indication, the justification will come in no time.

"I want to thank everyone who contributed to the project and everyone who worked on it. There were a lot of people who put time and money and energy in it," Vulich told attendees of the June 28 grand re-opening. "It's something the city of Clinton could never have done as a city. This is a beautiful building that needed to be saved, needed to be redone. It's one of the jewels of Clinton, Iowa."

Now that the renovation is complete and gatherings of area residents fill the Lodge's



those operations. After all, he ceremonially turned the keys over to the Clinton City Council at the June 14 Committee of the Whole meeting. He says it's now up to Vulich and others to ensure Clinton-area residents have the Lodge to gather with friends, family members and co-workers in one of the most picturesque locations around.

"It's in such great shape now, and it's up to the elected officials to keep it that way," Willoughby said. "It can be used year-round now, and it's never been able to do that before. Hopefully they (officials) care about it as much as they should."

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So Willoughby and his colleagues did just that.

The Lodge was nearly completely gutted, according to Willoughby. Almost every aspect of the main meeting hall has been updated, the hardwood floor was polished to look brand new, and the grandiose stone-back veranda provides an outdoor meeting place to take in the views of the

park, among other updates. But perhaps more important than the visible changes, the bowels of the building have also been improved.

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Now that the renovation is complete and gatherings of area residents fill the Lodge's main hall on a regular basis, becoming "under-loved" once again is not something the iconic structure can afford.

Regular maintenance and upkeep will need to continue to fulfill Willoughby's vision of the building becoming fully self-sustaining.

Willoughby has called on city officials to head

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