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Donations still needed for GAR project

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July 4, 2009

From Staff Reports

AURORA -- A Web site where donations are being collected for the restoration of the Grand Army of the Republic Memorial has collected about \$350 so far.

The site was created on behalf of the Aurora Preservation Commission by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Donations -- which can be made online at bit.ly/AuroraGAR -- will help defray the cost of recasting the soldier that has stood guard over the downtown GAR Memorial for more than 130 years, as well as assist with interior rehabilitation.

The rooftop soldier is now at the end of its lifespan, according to Jan Mangers, Historic Preservation Commission director. Constructed of potash metal, it is too brittle to remain outdoors in the elements, and weighing more than 1,000 pounds, it is not safe to risk failure while on top of the GAR building at 23 E. Downer Place, she said.

The original statue, which was unveiled on July 4, 1878, will be refurbished as an interior display and recast in bronze to be placed back on top of the building. With the estimated \$50,000 restoration, the soldier will stand on guard for at least another century, city officials said.

The Preservation Commission became eligible for donation assistance from the National Trust when an online contest secured \$55,000 for the restoration of the stained glass windows in the GAR memorial.

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