

November 2014

Andersonville Water Tank rebirth is under way

Hardly a day goes by at the Swedish American Museum without some visitor inquiring about the status of the Andersonville Water Tower Tank that was perched on its roof for almost nine decades. After eight months since its removal, there is progress to report.

A victim of Chicago's past severe winter, the water tank's structure failed, and on March 20 it was brought down in a 13-hour operation. Since that day, it reposed in the Museum parking lot at Foster and Ashland while its future was being considered.

The severely damaged tank is soon to be dismantled and its venerable timbers salvaged for commemorative uses. An alternative replica is being designed to replace the symbolic icon in the neighborhood that was once home to a large number of Swedish immigrants.

Erected in 1927 over what was then Lind Hardware, the tank functioned as the source of water for the building's fire suppression system until the record harsh winter of 2013-14 caused irreparable harm to the structure. A thick layer of ice cracked the tank's base allowing water to leak into the Museum.

Because wood-and-iron water tanks from this time period had estimated life spans of no more than 100 years, Museum officials had followed best practices in maintaining the tank. Restorative work was completed a few years ago. The tank stands 16 feet tall and has held up to 20,000 gallons of water.

In the 1990s the water tank was painted blue and yellow, the colors of the Swedish flag – a tribute to the area's rich history and cultural ties to Sweden. The community-at-large fully embraced it as a beacon for Andersonville.

The next chapter in the history of the Andersonville Water Tower is still being written. The Swedish American Museum, along with supporters and community partners, is working to raise \$150,000 that is needed to recreate this valued neighborhood symbol.

Clearly, it will no longer be a functioning water tower but will serve as a landmark for the area, and a link both to Swedish heritage and to the architectural history of Chicago. It will need to maintain the form and spirit of the original tank.

The good news is that just over \$70,000 has been raised toward the Water Tower Fund's projected goal for restoration of the tank to the Museum skyline. Thanks to the generosity of two long-time Museum supporters and life trustees, Bo and Anita Hedfors, every gift made by the end of the year will be matched up to a total of \$15,000.

The Museum is grateful for major gifts of \$10,000 or more made previously by life trustees Ulla and Bertil Brunk, the Edith Marie Appleton Foundation by trustee Albert Goodman, and the Andersonville Chamber of Commerce.

The Museum hopes to be able to announce, going in to 2015, that \$100,000 has been raised for the Water Tower Fund. Then plans for the design of the new landmark can be solidified and the timeline for its creation and installation developed.

Individuals and organizations that want to be a part of the resurrection of the Andersonville Water Tower can donate to the specially created fund. Special events will take place at the Museum and around the community. For details, visit the web site, www.SwedishAmericanMuseum.org.