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Work set to begin in February on the Door County Granary

The Sturgeon Bay Historical Society Foundation is pleased to announce that work will begin on Phase II of its rehabilitation of the Teweles and Brandeis Grain Elevator, known as the Door County Granary, on Monday, February 5. Phase II will restore the interior of the historic structure, complete the exterior, build the catering kitchen and public restroom addition, install landscaping and signage and ready the ground floor for occupancy.

“There’s been an incredible amount of work behind the scenes – design, engineering, permitting, floodplain review, historic assessment, fundraising,” said SBHSF’s Project Manager Nicole Matson. “Even much of the Phase I work done in 2021 and 2022, like drilling new pilings, pouring a new foundation and restoring the columns that hold up the internal bins, was work the community couldn’t see. We’re excited to begin a phase of work that will be more visible.”

The Construction Manager for the Door County Granary project is Greenfire Management Services, a company with Potawatomi Tribal roots headquartered in Milwaukee with an office in Wausau. Greenfire president, Jeb Meier, expressed the firm’s enthusiasm about the project. “We’re excited about the historical significance of this project. It is an honor to be working with the Sturgeon Bay Historical Society and LA DALLMAN Architects, both organizations with great passion and professionalism. We’re proud to be part of this regionally important project.” Greenfire is an award-winning firm that has completed more than 150 projects throughout the state and region.

Work will begin in February and March with repairs made to the 19 wooden grain bins and other features. Construction of the addition and the installation of siding and windows and doors is scheduled for April and May. Phase II will be completed by the beginning of August.

The Granary has garnered local and national attention since it was listed on the State and National Registries of Historic Places in 2018 and was included as a centerpiece in Sturgeon Bay’s West Waterfront Redevelopment Plan in 2019. It also appeared on the cover of Architect Magazine when it won a Progressive Architectural Award in 2021.

Built in 1901 of old-growth timber, the Door County Granary was part of a food pipeline that extended across the United States and allowed grain to be moved from farm fields in western states to markets in the east and even Europe. Wooden grain elevators are a uniquely American

invention that helped the United States become a world superpower; the first was built in Buffalo, New York, in 1842, to move grain through the Erie Canal. At one time, grain elevators – called “cathedrals of the prairie” – dotted the rural landscape. The Door County Granary is believed to be the last remaining wooden grain elevator located on the Great Lakes.

The Door County Granary will operate as a free, three-season interpreted museum as well as a gathering space for community and private events. “We are now turning our attention to research and museum displays,” said SBHSF president Laurel Hauser. “We will also be fundraising for Phase III, which will allow visitors access the upper bin and headhouse levels.”

According to Hauser, SBHSF will be hiring an executive director in the coming months. “We are grateful to the many donors and volunteers who have supported this project. We’re excited to share the Granary’s history, and we can’t wait to invite people into the building.” SBHSF expects to hold a soft opening in the fall of 2024 and a grand opening in May of 2025 when interpretive elements are installed.

Funding for the Door County Granary project has been provided by the USDA Rural Development, the 1923 Fund, the David L. and Rita E. Nelson Family Fund of the Community Foundation of the Fox Valley Region, the National Trust for Historic Places, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and others. Anyone interested in contributing time, expertise, stories, artifacts or funds to the Door County Granary Project should email sturgeonbayhistoricalsociety@gmail.com or contact an SBHSF board member. More information is available at www.sturgeonbayhistoricalsociety.org.

The Sturgeon Bay Historical Society Foundation, a 501(c)3 organization founded in 2016, is dedicated to preserving Sturgeon Bay’s living history for future generations through advocacy, preservation and education.