

The Keokuk Union Depot Model – Behind the Scenes

by Christen Sundquist Martin



Nineteen thousand, five hundred and eight-five is approximately how many basswood tiles were colored, cut and individually placed on top of the Keokuk Union Depot model. Or at least it's a very good, educated guess as my husband, Matt Martin, and I lost track after the first five thousand!

We were commissioned by Neal Vogel of Restoric to construct a model that would be placed on display to help kickstart the roof fundraising campaign. We were very excited and honored to be a part of this project.

Our first steps included converting our 3D virtual model into 2D line work so that we could use a laser cutter to cut a majority of the pieces of the model. The decision to use a laser cutter was to ensure accuracy and allow us more depth and detail such as adding brick and stone patterns to the model pieces. Ninety percent of the model was laser cut and, as you could guess, the remaining 10% were the roof tiles which, ironically, took 90% of the time!

After we received the laser cut pieces, it was time to color. We used several stain pens and combinations thereof, to get the correct colors that would best reflect the natural tones of the depot once it was restored.

When every piece was finally colored, it was time to start gluing. Every window and door was comprised of three layers that added depth and shadows. Once the windows and doors were glued together, they were inserted in between the exterior face and interior face of the model's walls. (Note: The walls are hollow to keep the weight of the model down.)

After the walls were glued together, it was time to work on the never-ending roof. We knew that this was going to be the most time-consuming portion

of the model but we also knew that it was the most important. Besides preserving the aesthetics of the proposed roof, we wanted to create an option for the roof pieces to be removed to show not only the interior of the model but also show the existing roof.

Gluing together the roof pieces went surprisingly well. However, the next step in constructing the roof definitely tested our marriage! At first, we were only going to install 1/8" strips of scored (lightly cut lines) basswood that would allow for quick installation as the long strips could be layered on top of each other. After scoring the first 30 or so strips and layering them, we found that it did not give a good representation



Aside from the roof tiles, the model's pieces were laser cut then hand colored.

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of the clay tiles. To compare, we created a mock-up of the lightly scored strips as well as a mock-up of the individual cut tiles and found that the cut tiles created a more accurate representation of the restored roof. So, an executive decision (by yours truly) was made to begin cutting the 19,585 pieces that would (days—weeks?—later) make up the roof of the model. The final pieces of the model included the finials. We used copper sheets that were cut, bent and glued together and topped with copper beads.

Between the two of us, we spent over 200 hours on the model, consumed a truckload of caffeine, emptied an entire box of Band-Aids and ate several meals consisting of hastily prepared lo-mein. And we wouldn't have had it any other way! This model was certainly a labor of love, and to be able to be a part of this campaign (admittedly, a small part) is beyond compare, an effort easily worth it when, in the end, we get to see the Keokuk Union Depot's roof restored!

The finished product is currently traveling around Keokuk to various locations in order to raise community awareness of the ongoing roof restoration project.



Nearly 20,000 tiny "tiles" were cut then glued to the roof of the model.



Through the first few weeks of 2016, the Keokuk Union Depot Foundation has received approximately \$505,000 from over 200 donors toward the \$667,000 match required to earn the Jeffris grant of \$333,000. Contributions to the roof restoration project may be made to the Keokuk Union Depot Foundation, P.O. Box 463, Keokuk, IA 52632.

For further information, visit the Depot's web sites: www.keokukuniondepot.org and www.depot125.org.

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