

Ravenna flagpole friends raise \$80,000

By DAVID E. DIX | PUBLISHER Published: December 5, 2012 4:00AM

A grass roots campaign to save and repair Ravenna's historic downtown flagpole has raised nearly \$80,000 of the \$150,000 needed, Kent Rotarians learned Tuesday.

Jack Schafer, president of Trexler Rubber, and Attorney Peggy DiPaola, founders of a citizen effort called Friends of the Flagpole, a group that is on track to become eligible to receive charitable deductible gifts to save and repair the flagpole. Ravenna Township Trustees, owners of the flagpole, were considering demolishing the flagpole, fearful the township lacked the wherewithal to maintain and properly insure the historic structure.

At Kent Rotary's weekly meeting, Schafer and DiPaola explained the significance of the flagpole, a 150-ft. steel box lattice structure that replaced a wooden flagpole in front of the Portage County Courthouse in Ravenna in 1893. At the time, it was one of the tallest structures in Ohio, rivaling the Society Bank Building in downtown Cleveland in height.

Constructed by the Van Dorn Iron Works Company of Cleveland at the cost of \$800, the flagpole's builders utilized the same technology used to build the Eiffel Tower in Paris in 1889, DiPaola said.

On a per capital basis, she noted humorously that the Ravenna flagpole is taller, since the population of Ravenna at the time was 4,000 whereas the population of Paris exceeded 1 million.

Similar flagpoles were built during that era in communities across the United States, but only a few survive, and Ravenna's is one of them, Schafer said.

Once the \$150,000 goal has been reached, he said, the flagpole will be dismantled by a company specializing the work and then repaired and shipped back to Ravenna and reassembled.

He told Rotarians that those wishing to help can do so by sending their donations to Friends of the Flagpole Association, PO Box 444, Ravenna, Ohio, 44266 or bring their checks to the Portage Community Bank branches in Ravenna or Kent for deposit.

Reprinted with permission of the publisher.