

# The Berkshire Eagle

## A shining light: Veterans War Memorial Tower reopens



**The Berkshire Eagle**

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**ADAMS** — On the heels of an extensive, \$2.8 million renovation project, the Veterans War Memorial Tower is fully open to the public.

State and local officials gathered at the summit of Mount Greylock on Wednesday for the opening — the project was largely completed by the start of the season, but the interior of the tower had remained closed.

Among those in attendance were Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton,

Department of Veterans' Services Secretary Francisco Urea, and Department of Conservation and Recreation Deputy Commissioner Priscilla Geigis.

One of the goals of the project was to update and enhance the beacon at the top of the tower.

As a result, there are now 12 banks of six light-emitting diodes, or LEDs, each of which emits 27,000 lumens, for a grand total of 1.9 million lumens. It is four times brighter than it was when it was shut down in 2013. Under the right weather conditions, the beacon is visible from 75 miles away.

The new beacon was illuminated at 11 a.m. on Veterans Day — the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month.

The renovations have left the tower looking brand new, including a handicapped-accessible rotunda, and a moisture control system negating the water issues that had caused the tower to decay through decades. And everything has been cleaned and polished, after a complete reconstruction of the rotunda to repair moisture damage.

The tower was closed in 2013 after water infiltration caused cracking of the exterior stonework and degradation of the interior walls, causing pieces to start falling from the walls and ceilings.

It had been plagued by chronic moisture problems caused by the endless freezing, expanding, thawing, contracting and condensation that comes with extreme weather and temperature changes.

Every winter, the south side of the tower is completely coated by ice, or hard rime frost, in a natural freezing and thawing cycle that is hard to protect against. Moisture creeps into the cracks in the granite stonework and freezes, causing the smaller cracks to grow and allowing moisture through to the interior.

Renovation work began in 2015. Before work stopped in October of that year, workers were able to remove interior finishes needing replacement, repoint masonry and reseal the joints on the tower and terrace walls, clean the exterior masonry on the tower, and set new concrete on the terrace for the new handicapped-accessible front door.

Allegro Construction of Pittsfield was the primary contractor on the project.

The elevation at the summit of Mount Greylock is 3,491 feet — the highest point in the state. Mount Greylock's summit is the only subarctic, or boreal, climate in southern New England.

The 93-foot-tall granite stone tower was constructed in 1932. The water infiltration issues prompted a total reconstruction in the 1970s and major repairs in the 1990s.

This round of repairs includes the resealing of the exterior, repair of ventilation fans, and the installation of a new dehumidification system. In combination with sealants developed

specifically for this project and applied between the exterior granite stones, moisture inside the tower will be significantly reduced, hopefully preventing further long-term damage.

There was also a new cap installed on the railing of the spiral stairway leading to the observation deck at the top of the tower, as well as new lighting in the memorial and the stairwell.

The project is funded through an \$800,000 federal grant, a \$1.4 million commitment from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, and nearly \$600,000 from the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Not including the tower repairs, Mount Greylock has seen \$22.5 million in improvements since 2006, including the rehabilitation of its historic parkways, the rehabilitation of its visitor center, and interpretive development.

The tower was built with granite blocks in 1931-32 for about \$200,000. It was designed by Boston-based architects Maginnis & Walsh, and built by contractors J.G. Roy & Son of Springfield.

It was dedicated in 1933, according to the Mount Greylock State Reservation website, as "a tribute to courage, endurance, loyalty and self-sacrifice, wherever these qualities have been shown, by the state's men and women in the uniform of the state or nation."

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