



Times photo by Kimm Anderson, kaanderson@stcloudtimes.com

Stearns County Parks Director Chuck Wocken (left) and Bruno Gad move blocks under a derrick at Quarry Park in this archive photo. Wocken says the derrick could be operating this fall.

Gruber to build derrick housing

Quarry visitors could see machine operate

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WAITE PARK — A 106-year-old derrick once used to lift huge blocks of granite could be operating again by fall, thanks to a St. Cloud company's efforts.

Dale Gruber Construction has offered to construct a building to house the equipment that powers and controls the derrick, which currently is stored outside under a tarp at Quarry Park.

The new building will allow

visitors to look inside and see how the derrick operates, but not enter for safety reasons, said Chuck Wocken, Stearns County parks director.

The county got the 35-foot derrick in 2006 from Cold Spring Granite Co. Previously used at a quarry in Cook, the steel girder contraption can reach 70 feet and lift 35 tons.

It's part of county efforts to preserve the history of the granite mining industry in Central Minnesota at Quarry Park. Plans call for building a granite interpretive center near the derrick.

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Derrick

Once the building is complete and the derrick is hooked to a generator, it should be operational, Wocken said.

"We're hoping to be able to flip a switch in September and lift a stone," he said.

Gruber will provide the labor and is seeking donations to cover the costs of materials.

The total cost is about \$31,000 — one of the largest gifts the county has received, County Administrator George Rindelaub said.

Dale Gruber said his company was looking for a way to commemorate its 25-year anniversary and give something back to the community.

"The entire Central Minnesota would benefit from this," Gruber said. "The gran-

ite industry has been one of the founding businesses in the area that has brought St. Cloud to where it is."

Park staff salvaged antique windows from a similar equipment shed. They have been refurbished and will be used in the new building for authenticity, Gruber said.

He also plans to use old-fashioned construction methods, including leaving boards exposed.

But the derrick needs to be fitted with a modern motor to make it work.

Once the project is complete, the derrick probably will be fired up for special occasions only until an interpretive center is built that can supply electricity permanently, Wocken said.

Gruber hopes completing the derrick building will help move the granite interpretive center forward.

"We felt if this part got

done, people would get more interested in it," he said.

Eventually, park visitors will be able to watch how granite was mined, Wocken said.

The plan is to lift a four-ton stone, pivot it and drop in onto a wagon, the same way a

quarrier would have brought a stone out of a quarry.

"It's a memorial to an industry that grew out of Stearns County and was part of every family's heritage in the St. Cloud area," he said.