

The Belvedere Condominiums

Rehabilitation

2016

Having just celebrated the Belvedere's 90th anniversary this September, we felt it appropriate to showcase some of our conservation and restoration efforts, to celebrate our home's past, present and future, and to honor the amazing and dedicated craftspeople who have made it possible.

For more information, please contact our outstanding building management company, Towne Properties.

There also is a Facebook group called "Friends of the Belvedere Condominiums" – group members have posted quite a variety of pictures, articles, and background information there.

One: Energy Efficiency

Complete overhaul of the building's gas-powered steam heating system, resulting in tens of thousands of dollars in savings yearly:

- *Installation of modern boilers*
- *Replacement of every single steam trap in the building*
- *Selection and approval of modern, energy-efficient windows, to replace the original but inefficient one-pane, steel frame windows*
- *Switch to all-LED lighting in public spaces*





A new boiler gets maneuvered into the boiler room

The old boilers were very quiet but also very inefficient by today's standards. Two new, much smaller units were enough to replace three big old cast iron giants.

There were initial problems with noise mitigation, and those proved difficult to solve, but they were solved eventually.

When the old steam traps throughout the building were tested, most of them were found defective, so we decided it was easier to just replace every single one.



The Belvedere had all its terribly inefficient, original, single-pane steel frame windows until about 10 years ago. The owners' association had never managed to unite to get all of them replaced, even though many of the windows were in bad condition, and sometimes showered the sidewalks with broken glass in high wind weather. Too many owners were opposed because of the project's high cost – the building has about 1,000 windows.

But a new window type (commercial grade triple pane vinyl) was finally selected and approved, under the condition that owners could replace their windows on their own schedule.

The new windows could not keep the exact proportions of the original windows, but they come close: this 2016 picture shows old and new windows side by side. If you know they are there, you can kind of pick them out, but otherwise you would never know.

Two: The Carriage Lanterns

The four magnificent carriage lanterns flanking the building entrance were deinstalled, cleaned, stripped and repainted:

Before



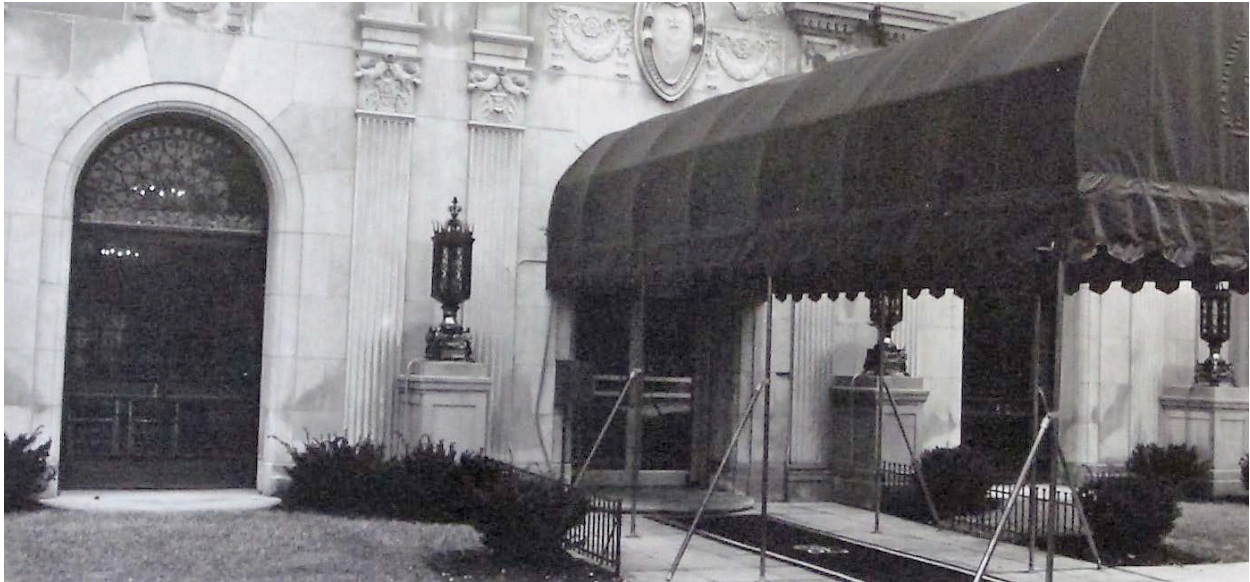
After



Three: Ironwork

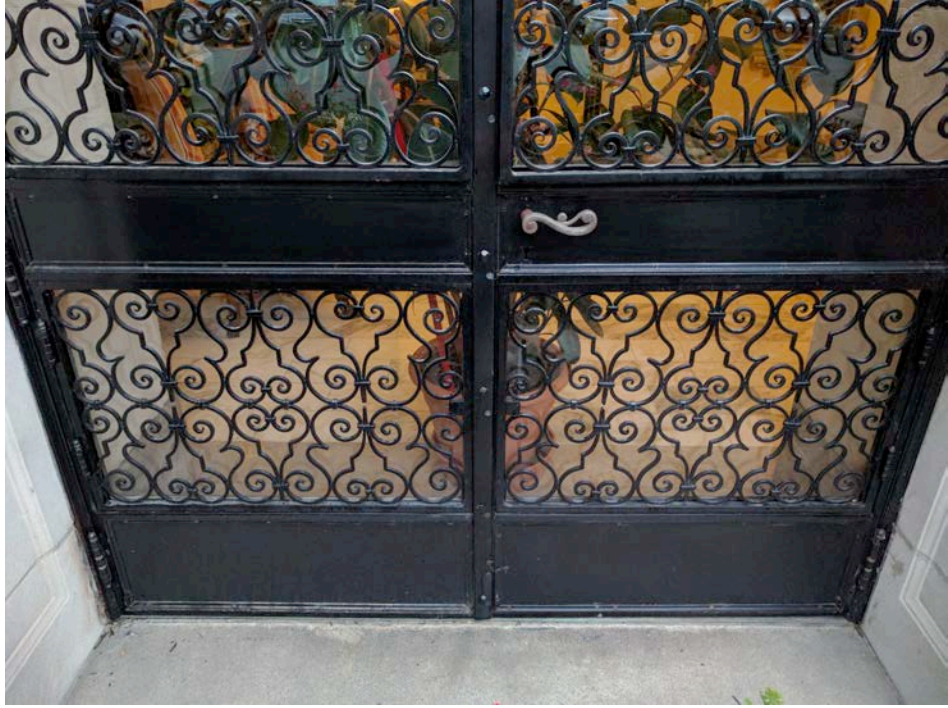
The Belvedere contains some excellent ironwork and brass detail. The pictures below show the wonderful work done by our local experts to restore the ironwork doors to the left and right of the entrance:

In the 1950's:



2010 picture showing deterioration of the door's bottom. The door is inoperable. Other doors were also repaired, but this repair was the most difficult one. The doors had to be taken apart completely, fixed, and reassembled at the end.

The repaired door today:



Four: Lobby Restoration

The Belvedere's outer lobby is a work of art – marble floor, decorative detail on the walls, two large radiators covered by ornate ironwork screens, but all of that is nothing but a frame for the arched ceiling, which is covered by painted canvas, and contains 12 oval-framed paintings by Cincinnati's famous mural painter Herman Henry Wessel.

The canvas and colors have had a lot to deal with over the years. The canvas needs minor fixes every few years, but the last major restoration was more thorough, not only cleaning and reattaching the canvas, but also the coloring of the wall details.



Kristen Lemon restores the canvas, 2011. Note the cleaned area on the left.





Five: The Roof Urns

The Belvedere was originally built with 8 ornamental metal urns on top of the roof. Over time, 6 of them were removed for reasons unknown – were they a safety hazard, or too hard to keep clean, or just considered unnecessary?

When one of the urns was rediscovered in storage, the board decided to make enough copies of it to replace the lost ones. As a side benefit it was discovered that previously mysterious problems with water leakage could be traced to the places where the old urns had been missing. Without the urns on top of their bases, the fastening holes created weak points in the roof.

A picture from the late 1920s, with all the urns



In 2005, only two urns remained



2016 – all the urns are back!

