

36 Gramercy Park East Restoration - 2014

Description by 36 GPE President Michael Del Giudice

We are in the process of completing a significant restoration of our historic building. When the scaffolding is removed at the end of this year, we will have fully restored and waterproofed the terra cotta facade of the building, rebuild in their entirety the roof cornice and the decorative terra cotta soldiers at the top of the building and we will have made major repairs to the rear (east side) of the building, including the restoration of the ornate sheet metal window bays, and completely replaced the roof.

To facilitate this historical renovation, our architects, Cutsogeorge, Toomen, and Allen, performed extensive research at the James Reilly Gordon Archive at the University of Texas to examine and document the original drawings, specifications, and the full sized pattern drawings from the original design and construction of the building in 1911. These documents included the original photos of models and shop drawings from the Atlantic Terra Cotta Company of Perth Amboy, New Jersey, one of the major terra cotta manufacturers during the heyday of architectural terra cotta.

All of the replacement pieces that we will use have been hand pressed true glazed terra cotta to match the original pieces, including the distinctive projecting grotesques, exactly as they were originally installed in 1911. Nevertheless, a significant percentage of the original terra cotta is being carefully cleaned and will be reset once the steel frame has been fully repaired, coated and flashed. The existing sound pieces will be reset using new stainless steel anchorage. The replica terra cotta is being manufactured by Boston Valley Terra Cotta in Buffalo NY.

All of the materials used thus far, including brick and mortar samples for the secondary elevation work, have been reviewed and fully approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission staff. The terra cotta samples have been approved using the same process. The final result will be a true restoration of James Reilly Gordon's magnificent facade facing Gramercy Park.

While all of this important work has been proceeding, we have also installed a building wide, state-of-the-art central air conditioning system that will begin operation Friday July 11th. The installation of such a system is a rarity in any occupied building, but particularly in an occupied building well over 100 years old. This system will provide reliable cooling to each of our units and eliminate the need for window air conditioners.

Equally remarkable, and at the same time, we will have completed 16 full scale apartment renovations representing approximately sixty percent of the residential square footage of the building.