

BELVEDERE HOTEL
1 East Chase Street
Baltimore
Independent City
Maryland

HABS MD-1226
HABS MD-1226

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BELVEDERE HOTEL

HABS No. MD-1226

- Location: One East Chase St., Baltimore, Baltimore County, Maryland
- Present Owner: Council Unit of Owners of the Belvedere Condominium
- Present Occupant: The Historic Belvedere Grand Condominium
- Present Use: Condominiums, events and meetings in former ballrooms and dining room, restaurants and other business tenants
- Significance: Construction of the Belvedere in 1902-03 gave Baltimore a modern skyscraper hotel and moved large-scale commercial development into the wealthy Mount Vernon neighborhood north of downtown. The Belvedere featured a fashionable French Beaux-Arts form with a mansard roof and elaborate decoration on the exterior and interior, as well as the latest in structural and systems technology. Designed by the firm of Parker and Thomas (Baltimore and Boston), this hotel was a prime example of contemporary trends in hotel design as also seen in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.. Located between the uptown train stations and the central business district, the Belvedere became a gathering place for Baltimore's social elite and a prominent visual symbol of the Mount Vernon neighborhood.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1902-03
2. Architect: Parker and Thomas (Boston and Baltimore)
3. Original and subsequent owners:
 - Belvedere Hotel Co., 1903-
 - Union Trust Co., 1907-1917
 - Charles Consolvo (Jefferson Realty Co.), 1917-1933

Savings Bank of Baltimore, receivership - 1933-42
Belvedere Hotel Corporation, 1942-46
United States Realty-Sheraton Corporation, 1946-68
Wellington Associates, New York, 1968-69
Gotham Hotels, Ltd., 1969-73 (lease to Snowden Corporation, Baltimore for use as college dormitory, 1971-72) - part of Sheraton, default on loan
Monumental Life Insurance Company, 1973-76 (through mortgage default by Gotham)
Victor Frenkil, 1976-1990 (mix of apartments, hotel rooms, and commercial facilities)
Twelfth Street Realty, 1990-1991 (foreclosure, holding company for Meritor Savings Bank)
Belvedere Realty Corporation (condominium conversion), 1991
Council of Unit Owners of the Belvedere Condominium, 1993-present

Chain of Title for Ward 11, Section 12, Block 0506, Lot 045:
Reference is to the Land Records of Baltimore City, Maryland, which fall under the supervision of the Baltimore City Court.

1902 Deed February 18, 1902, recorded in Liber RO 1944, folio 5.
Citizens Trust and Deposit
To
Belvidere Building Co., for \$10 and valuable considerations, includes two lots with frontage on East Chase St. (David K. Este and William Ellinger - hold a mortgage that is released on April 16, 1902).

Deed June 16, 1902, recorded in Liber RO 1963, folio 123.
Joseph W. Jenkins Jr. and wife
To
Belvidere Building Co.
(Lot 57 feet wide on east side of North Charles for \$140,000.)
Release of Mortgage June 20, 1902, recorded in Liber RO 1964, folio 122, \$1
Union Trust Co. Of Maryland (as trustee)
To
Belvidere Building Co.
(The Belvidere Building Company had mortgaged the two East Chase Street lots on March 4, 1902 (recorded in Liber RO 1945, folio 499) as security for 650 \$1,000 bonds. No money was indentured so the mortgage was released to allow plan to enlarge hotel to three lots.)

[gap - information not available]

- 1958 Assignment December 1, 1958, recorded in Liber JFC 509, folio 55.
Fidelity-Baltimore National Bank
To
Sheraton Hotel Corporation.
- 1959 Assignment April 3, 1959, recorded in Liber JFC 597, folio 485.
Mercantile Safe Deposit and Trust
To
Sheraton Hotel Corporation.
- 1964 Mortgage March 25, 1964, recorded in Liber JFC 1664, folio 190.
Monumental Life Insurance
To
Sheraton Hotel Corporation.
(Mortgage for \$1.5 million, contingent on right to raze improvements on 1017, 1019,
1021, and 1023 N. Charles St. for construction of parking garage/retail addition.)
- c.1973 Deed, recorded in Liber RHB 3130, folio 338.
James O'C. Gentry (as trustee)
To
Monumental Life Insurance.
(Sheraton/Gotham default on mortgage.)
- 1976 Mortgage March 16, 1976, recorded in Liber RHB 3327, folio 797.
Monumental Life Insurance
To
One East Chase St. Associates.
- 1978 Deed July 26, 1978, recorded in Liber RHB 3642, folio 557.

One East Chase St. Associates
To
Mercantile Safe Deposit and Trust Co. (as trustees)
(Foreclosed on mortgage of 3.5 million commercial note, 2.5 million residential note).
- [gap - information not available]
- 1991 Deed March 26, 1991, recorded in Liber SEB 2795, folio 437.
Twelfth Street Realty Corporation
To

Belvedere Realty Corporation

(Twelfth Street bought the property at a foreclosure sale on February 19, 1991. Exhibit A indicates that the property includes hotel (1 East Chase St.), lots with parking garage and retail (1017, 1019, 1021, 1023 N. Charles), and 7 East Chase (east side of alley). No. 7 East Chase was added to the property on July 8, 1941, deed recorded in Liber MLP 6188, folio 358.)

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Wells Brothers Co. (New York)

5. Original plans and construction: A partial set of original plans by Parker and Thomas for the Belvedere Hotel was available at the Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland. A rendering published in *Architectural Record* and *Hotel World*, also well as early photographs at the Maryland Historical Society indicate the original exterior form of a twelve-and-a-half-story tower with a U-shaped light well at the rear above the second floor.

6. Alterations and additions: The exterior form and the public spaces on the ground and twelfth floors are still intact, with major alterations to the interior of the guest room and service floors. Interior alterations include converting the hotel rooms into apartments/condominiums starting in the 1970s and reconfiguration of restaurant, offices and service spaces from the 1940s to the present. In 1978 a cocktail lounge was inserted in the attic space above the twelfth floor, with large windows visible on the exterior of the mansard roof. That same year an addition was attached to the south elevation that included retail space, a parking garage, and a new glass and steel entrance from North Charles Street. The basement was completely reconfigured with new retail spaces as part of the addition.

B. Historical Context:

The Belvedere was built on the northside of the elite residential neighborhood of Mount Vernon Square and a short distance south of both the Pennsylvania and Baltimore and Ohio Railroad stations. The form and decoration of the Belvedere followed the latest fashion for French Beaux-Arts architecture, with a mansard roof, heavy carved cornices, and a symmetrical form. American cities, particularly in the industrialized northeast, experienced a hotel building boom around the turn of the twentieth century. New York was the undisputed leader of the hotel industry during the first decade of the twentieth century, with dozens of modern skyscraper hotels improving on the model established during the 1890s by the Waldorf-Astoria. Urban hotels traditionally were clustered near the railroad station to serve business travelers. The Waldorf-Astoria served a transient population but also pioneered the idea of hotel as social gathering place for the local elite. Other cities followed New York's model and Baltimore's Belvedere Hotel was indicative of this trend.

Planning the Belvedere

The original Belvedere investors were local businessmen and members of Baltimore society: Nelson Perrin, W.P. Harvey, Seymour Mandelbaum, Alex Brown, Robert Taylor, and H.A. Parr. On June 5, 1900 the lot at the southeast corner of East Chase and North Charles Streets was acquired from the estate of Henry James for \$75,000.¹ The property - 1031 North Charles Street - stretched approximately 50 feet along North Charles and 100 along East Chase. The main elevation of the sizable house on the site faced North Charles Street, with a long side elevation along East Chase and an outbuilding at the back edge of the lot at Lovegrove Alley. The Belvidere Building Company was officially incorporated on April 10, 1901 with \$500,000 of capital stock and the intention of building a new hotel on this property.² Clarence Ellinger received the contract to demolish the James house on May 22, 1901.³ The 1901-02 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows this lot as vacant.⁴

An elevation rendering by architects Douglas H. Thomas, Jr. and J. Harleston Parker showing the proposed “Belvidere Hotel” was published in the May 1901 issue of *Architects and Builders Journal*.⁵ This early version of the design is similar in form and detail to the eventual hotel, but with a much smaller footprint to fit into the single lot. By August, *Architects and Builders Journal* reported that the partners planned to build a hotel at least 100 feet wide. Although orienting the hotel towards East Chase Street allowed for a main elevation of approximately 100 feet, it was considered desirable to acquire another long, narrow lot with frontage on North Charles. At this time, the Belvidere Building Company “had not yet succeeded in purchasing the residence and lot of Joseph W. Jenkins, which adjoin the hotel site.”⁶ The hotel investors had offered \$80,000 and Jenkins wanted \$125,00 for his three-story

¹Deed, (5 June 1900), Box 1, MS 1882 - Belvedere Building Company Records, 1900-58, Maryland Historical Society - Special Collections, Baltimore, MD (hereafter MHS).

²Articles of Incorporation, (10 April 1901), MHS, MS1882, Box 1. The Belvidere Building Company took its name from the former estate of John Eager Howard, which stood nearby until 1876. Shortly after construction, the hotel name adopted the alternate spelling “Belvedere.”

³Ellinger received a \$700 fee and the rights to all building materials except the stained glass.(MHS Agreement, Box 1)

⁴Sanborn Map Company, *Baltimore, Maryland*, (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1890, 1901-02).

⁵*Architects and Builders Journal* 2, no. 10 (May 1901): 29.

⁶“Baltimore Building Notes,” *Architects and Builders Journal* 3, no. 1 (August 1901): 16; also “Realty and Building,” *Baltimore Sun*, 13 July 1901, 10.

residence, outbuilding, and lot. The Jenkins property at 1029 North Charles Street was approximately 57 feet wide along North Charles Street and extended back to Lovegrove Alley at the middle of the block.

Presumably the negotiations reached an impasse because the Belvidere Building Company entered into a contract on February 27, 1902 with Wells Brothers Company of Philadelphia and Chicago to build the hotel on a lot with fifty feet along North Charles Street. Wells Brothers, a major New York construction firm, would subcontract many aspects of the job including the steel, terra cotta, granite, ornamental iron, cement, and excavation. The *Architects and Builders Journal* reported in April 1902 that excavation had begun. Then the Belvidere Building Company finally was able to acquire the Jenkins property at 1029 North Charles Street. On June 16, 1902 the Belvidere Building Company paid Jenkins \$140,000. Ellinger was hired to demolish the residence the same day.⁷

With acquisition of the Jenkins property at hand, the original contract with Wells Brothers was rewritten to reflect the expanded scope of the project. This revised contract was dated May 23, 1902.⁸ The actual price of labor and materials was not to exceed \$1 million and the contractor fee was \$85,000. Union Trust Company of Maryland held a mortgage on the property and William P. Harvey, Vice President, and Roland B. Harvey, Secretary, signed the contract on behalf of the Belvidere Building Company. In June *Architects and Builders Journal* reported that “Parker and Thomas are making new plans for the Belvidere Hotel. The original plans were to build only on the James lot, and they have been cancelled. It will take the architects several months to complete the plans.”⁹

The enlarged hotel project proceeded rapidly and by July the architects were expected to have the new plans completed in two weeks. On June 21, 1902, the board members of the Belvidere Building Company voted to increase their capital stock to \$1 million from \$750,000.¹⁰

Parker and Thomas

⁷“Baltimore Building Notes,” *Architects and Builders Journal* 3, no. 9 (April 1902): 12; (MHS Agreement, Box 1)

⁸Box 1, MS 1882 - Belvedere Building Company Records, 1900-58, MHS.

⁹“Baltimore Architects,” *Architects and Builders Journal* 3, no. 11 (June 1902): 8.

¹⁰“Baltimore Building Notes,” *Architects and Builders Journal*, 3, no. 12 (July 1902): 12-13. The project was financed by two sinking fund mortgages, one for \$850,000 of twenty-year gold bonds, dated January 1, 1903 and a second for \$250,000 ten-year gold bonds dated April 1, 1903. These bonds were to pay for the erection and equipment of the proposed hotel and were issued in \$1,000 denominations to bear five percent interest.

J. Harleston Parker (1873-1930) and Douglas H. Thomas, Jr. (1872-1915) formed an architectural partnership in 1900. Thomas was a Baltimore native from a socially prominent family who graduated from Johns Hopkins University in 1893. He then studied at Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1893-95 and apprenticed briefly with an unknown Boston firm. He traveled to Paris and Italy to study informally. Unlike Thomas, Parker was matriculated at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. The firm was founded shortly after Parker's return from Europe in 1900, with Thomas heading a Baltimore office and Parker one in Boston. It is not clear whether Thomas and Parker met while abroad or in Boston.¹¹

Parker and Thomas (after 1907, Parker, Thomas, and Rice), rapidly became the preeminent designers of commercial buildings in early twentieth century Baltimore. Their first major commission in Baltimore was the Alex Brown and Sons building at 135 East Baltimore Street, completed in 1901. Alex Brown was also one of the founding partners of the Belvidere Building Company and presumably recommended Parker and Thomas for the hotel job that year. Parker and Thomas went on to design other important buildings in Baltimore, including Gilman Hall on Johns Hopkins University's Homewood campus (1904), the Pennsylvania Railroad Company headquarters (1905), the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Company headquarters (1905-06), and the Savings Bank of Baltimore (1907). With so many opportunities for commissions after the devastating 1904 fire, the firm's Beaux-Arts informed approach reshaped the architectural identity of Baltimore's commercial downtown. According to a profile published in the August 1913 issue of *Architectural Record*, the firm had experience designing a variety of building types, including apartment buildings, office buildings, clubs, schools, city and country houses. However, the Belvedere was their only hotel.¹²

Opening the Belvedere

Construction proceeded during the second half of 1902 and through 1903. The large steel frame rose slowly over the Mount Vernon Square neighborhood and by end of 1903 the ornate new hotel was ready. At 188 feet the skyscraper hotel was the tallest building in Baltimore. It continues to loom over the many smaller scale structures in the immediate vicinity. The hotel featured approximately 300 guest rooms and bathrooms, a twelfth-floor ballroom and

¹¹Laurie Ossman. U.S. Department of the Interior, Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), No. MD-1122, "Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Company Headquarters Building," 2001. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹²H. D. Croly and C. Matlack Price, "Notes on the Work of Parker, Thomas, & Rice of Boston and Baltimore," *Architectural Record* 34, no. 2 (August 1913): 128.

banquet halls, and a dining room, tearoom and other entertaining rooms on the first and second floors. The kitchen, laundry and mechanical rooms were located in the basement and sub-basement.

An advertisement on the front page of the *Baltimore Sun* a few days before the official opening touted the Belvedere's modern safety features such as Otis Safety Plunger Elevators and "fireproof" construction as well as the cuisine and facilities for after-theater dining and other local entertainments.¹³ The first guests checked in on December 11th. In spite of workmen still putting the finishing touches on the lower floors, approximately sixty guest stayed at the Belvedere that night.¹⁴ The official grand opening was on December 14, 1903, with many prominent members of Baltimore society present. As described by the local press,

. . . it appeared as though every person of prominence in the city and many from other cities was present in some of the corridors or rooms of the building. The occasion was the formal opening of the house, and it was undoubtedly a great success, for the revolving doors at the Chase Street entrance were never idle and the army of attendants was kept busy receiving the patrons and showing the many beauties of the house.¹⁵

Its seems as though the management of the Belvedere hoped to follow the mode established by the Waldorf-Astoria in New York for the luxury hotel to serve as temporary lodging for travelers as well as a popular social venue for the local elite.

Baltimore's Modern Luxury Hotel

The Belvedere Hotel represented something new in the local hotel industry. Prior to construction of the Belvedere, the leading Baltimore hotel was the Hotel Rennert located downtown at Liberty and Saratoga Streets (now demolished). Built in 1885, the Rennert was known more for the local fare served in its dining room than for elegant accommodations. The 1904 edition of *Official Hotel Red Book and Directory* designated twelve Baltimore hotels as "first class," including the Rennert, Hotel Altamont, Hotel Joyce, and The Stafford. All of these

¹³*Baltimore Sun*, 11 December 1903, 1.

¹⁴"Guests Begin to Arrive," *Baltimore Sun*, 11 December 1903, 6.

¹⁵"The Belvedere is Open," *Baltimore Sun*, 15 December 1903, 12.

hotels were much smaller than the Belvedere. For example, the Hotel Joyce, an 1870s structure across from the Baltimore and Ohio's Camden Station near the waterfront, had only 130 rooms. Geographically the Stafford was the Belvedere's closest competitor, located on Washington Place at Mount Vernon Square. This ten-story hotel offered transient rooms on both the American (with board) and European (without board) plans, but was mainly a residential hotel without the major public spaces of the Belvedere.¹⁶ The Belvedere offered only European plan, or a la carte dining, which was becoming standard for modern urban hotels.

The hotel was not advertised in the *Hotel Red Book* directory until 1906, perhaps because of a change in management and a growing need to compete for travel dollars. The full page display ad featured a rendering of the hotel. The text boasted of "the hotel that has made Baltimore the most talked of City in America," before mentioning the more mundane but essential detail that it was located within five blocks of both the Pennsylvania and B&O Railroad stations. The variety of public spaces for dining and entertainment that set the Belvedere apart from its competition - ballroom, assembly room (banquet room with a stage), banquet rooms, palm room, tea room, restaurants - were prominently listed in the ad as well.¹⁷

The mansard-roofed tower of the Belvedere showed the growing influence of French Beaux-Arts in the architectural profession and closely followed the latest trend in hotel design established by New York City hotels such as the Hotel Astor, the Plaza, and the St. Regis. While similar in style, the Astor was intended for a popular, transient clientele, while the Plaza and St. Regis catered to a more exclusive, mostly long-term, rental audience. A 1905 *Architectural Record* article discussed the Belvedere as one of three recent hotels - in addition to the new Willard in Washington, DC and the Bellevue-Stratford in Philadelphia - as indicative this New York model spreading to other cities:

These new hotels are for the most part in a different class architecturally from any similar buildings in the same locality which have preceded them. The best hotels of Washington, Baltimore and Philadelphia had a reputation for good cooking and good service; but the buildings in which they were housed were antiquated. The new buildings, on the contrary, are all of them "sky-scrapers" constructed in the most approved manner, and decorated with every intention of obtaining a good-looking, as well as a showy, effect.¹⁸

¹⁶*Official Hotel Red Book and Directory*. (New York: Official Hotel Red Book and Directory Co., 1904), 168-171. The 1904 edition listed hotels in operation during 1903 and so not did include the Belvedere.

¹⁷*Official Hotel Red Book and Directory*. (New York: Official Hotel Red Book and Directory Co., 1906), 176. Only the name of the hotel and its manager were listed in the 1904. Declining to list an address and price like the other hotels was perhaps an early attempt at exclusivity that was dropped later.

¹⁸A. C. David, "Three New Hotels," *Architectural Record* 17, no. 3 (March 1905): 167.

All three hotels featured in *Architectural Record* shared a similar tripartite tower form with a crowning mansard roof punctuated by ornate dormers. True to the Beaux-Arts origins of this architectural mode, the exterior division of the facade reflected the interior function. Typically ballrooms were housed on the uppermost floor where the mansard allowed for large spaces uninterrupted by structural columns. The guest rooms logically were housed in the tower shaft, with light wells ideally providing ventilation to each room. The base of the structure, normally demarcated by rusticated stone facing and larger windows, housed public areas such as the lobby, dining room and café.

According to *Architectural Record*, one of the primary challenges of skyscraper hotel architecture was to design such a large-scale structure “in such a manner that it would be distinguished from the office-building and suggest some relation to domestic life.”¹⁹ The effect of the mansard roof with dormers, evoking an upper-class manor house, was deemed a successful solution to this problem. The author also praised the proportions of the thirteen story tower which gave the structure “in spite of its bulk, an aspect of propriety even in its quiet surroundings.”²⁰ The Belvedere was also applauded for having decorative detailing on all four facades, a result of its unusual siting in a residential neighborhood with its rear elevation facing toward Mount Vernon Square. The article also approved of the way Parker and Thomas handled the interior “without as much money at their disposal for the decoration of the building as they would in case it had been erected in a larger city.”²¹

Financial Challenges

In a 1904 article entitled “A Paucity of Hotels” at least one local journalist saw the local hotel offerings as inadequate to meet demand. Even with the recent construction of the Belvedere the writer perceived that “Baltimore is badly provided with this modern metropolitan feature. The few really good hotels already here, together with those building and projected will still leave the city away in the rear in this class of accommodations.”²² The article claimed that even before the fire earlier that year, Baltimore only had about a dozen respectable hotels and the market would support many more. However, the hotel trade press seemed to disagree with this optimistic assessment of the Baltimore market, and the Belvedere’s financial prospects. In 1905

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., 171.

²¹Ibid.

²²“A Paucity of Hotels,” *Architects and Builders Record* 7, no. 4 (November 1904): 11.

Hotel World publisher Henry Bohn expressed doubt that insular Baltimore society would support the “elegant and costly” Belvedere. Furthermore, he characterized Baltimore as a “way station” between Philadelphia and Washington, with little of interest to attract tourists other than the burnt remains of downtown and the Belvedere itself. Although Bohn praised the Belvedere’s design, location, and views, he was pessimistic about its future.²³ Later that year, Charles Owen, assistant manager of the Piedmont Hotel in Atlanta, concurred in his own *Hotel World* article. While very favorably impressed with the Belvedere’s amenities and reasonable prices, he described the hotel as “at least twenty-five years ahead of the demands, and as an investment is not likely to pay for some years to come.”²⁴ A *Hotel Monthly* article described the Belvedere as best suited for large social functions with its banquet halls and ballrooms on the upper floors, but referred to the Rennert as still being the leading commercial hotel in the city.²⁵ Although this comparison is somewhat uneven due to the different emphasis of a luxury hotel like the Belvedere versus a commercial hotel, it is revealing that the Rennert was still considered the leading hotel in the city.

Apparently the concern regarding the Belvedere’s potential profits was well-founded in spite of the praise for its design, decoration, and amenities. The hotel struggled financially from the beginning, with frequently changes in management and five different owners between 1903 and 1917. In 1907, the hotel was in receivership before purchase by the Union Trust Company for one million dollars, including furniture and supplies. The original cost just four years earlier was 1.75 million.²⁶ In 1917 it was purchased by Charles Consolvo of Virginia. Known as “Colonel,” Consolvo was a colorful character who also owned the Jefferson in Richmond (1895, Carrere and Hastings) and the Monticello in Norfolk (1898, rebuilt 1918 after a fire). All of Consolvo’s hotels were older structures that sought to provide a luxurious social setting for the local elite as well as rooms for business and pleasure travelers. Consistent management helped the Belvedere maintain its status as Baltimore’s most exclusive hotel even as new competitors opened such as the Emerson (1911) at Baltimore and Calvert Streets and the Southern Hotel at Light and Carrollton Streets. In location and appointment, these and other hotels built in the two decades after the Belvedere tended to emphasize a business clientele. It is likely that the still residential character of the Belvedere’s setting and its tearoom, dining room and other services catering to a local elite helped maintain that status. In 1925 the *Hotel Red Book* advertisement

²³H.J.B., “Baltimore-Washington-Pittsburgh: Observations in and Comments on Three Flourishing Cities,” *Hotel World* 61, no. 2 (8 July 1905): 8.

²⁴Charles J. Owen, “A Hotel Manager on His Travels,” *Hotel World* 61, no. 10 (2 September 1905): 16.

²⁵“Baltimore, Md.,” *Hotel Monthly* 13, no. 151 (October 1905): 19.

²⁶“Receivers Named for the Belvedere,” *Baltimore Sun*, 24 August 1933, Vertical File, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, MD.

for the Belvedere boasted “Baltimore’s Ultra and one of America’s Representative Hotels. The Meeting Place in Baltimore of the World’s Leaders, in Art, Science, Literature, Stage and Business. Restaurants of Excellence.”²⁷

Changes in the Hotel Industry, c. 1920 to 1950

By the 1920s the form and arrangement of the Hotel Belvedere and other turn-of-the-century structures had fallen out of favor for hotel design. Starting in the 1910s and continuing through the 1920s, new and ever larger urban hotels typically utilized a vaguely Renaissance Revival form with multiple flat-roofed towers rising from a base several stories high. Advances in structural engineering allowed ballrooms and other large spaces to be located on the lower floors. This arrangement was now considered preferable to the inconvenience of moving large groups up and down the elevators. In Baltimore this trend is well-represented by the Lord Baltimore, built on Hanover Street in 1928. This twenty-three story structure is typical of a 1920s urban commercial hotel. Elaborate public rooms for entertaining and large spaces for conventions represented the latest in hotel accommodations at this time.²⁸

The Great Depression brought hard times to hotels across the country, with approximately seventy percent of the industry in receivership or other financial difficulty by the early 1930s.²⁹ The Belvedere struggled to stay afloat and by 1933 the hotel was in receivership.³⁰ In 1935 Consolvo relinquished controlling interest in the hotel to the Savings Bank of Baltimore. All local hotels were struggling due to the drastic decrease in travel, prompting a June 1936 agreement between the leading Baltimore hotels - Belvedere, Lord Baltimore, Emerson, Southern, Rennert, and New Howard. These hotels agreed to a scale of minimum prices for dinners, banquets, and luncheons in order to avoid selling these services at less than cost.³¹ The bank owned the hotel until 1942 when a group of Baltimore businessmen purchased it and formed the Belvedere Hotel Corporation.

²⁷*Hotel Red Book* (1925): 242.

²⁸For more detail on the typology of early 20th century hotels see the author’s dissertation - “Consumption and Efficiency in the ‘City Within a City’: Commercial Hotel Architecture and the Emergence of Modern American Culture, 1890-1930.” Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 2003.

²⁹Robert J. Kennedy, “Reconstruction Hotel Corporation,” *Hotel Monthly* 40, no. 475 (October 1932): 49.

³⁰“Receivers Named for the Belvedere,” *Baltimore Sun*, 24 August 1933, Vertical File, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, MD.

³¹Box 1, MS 1882 - Belvedere Building Company Records, 1900-58, MHS.

In 1943, booklet was published to celebrate the Belvedere's fortieth anniversary.³² The first page introduced the hotel president and manager. Both of these men were well-connected to local real estate interests and business, but novices when it came to running a hotel. President John Mowbray was an officer and director for the National Association of Real Estate Boards and former president of the Roland Park Company, developers of an exclusive uptown neighborhood. Manager Albert S. Fox had no hotel experience prior to taking over management of the Belvedere in 1938, but previously worked for the Gibson Island Company developing that exclusive residential enclave on the Chesapeake Bay.³³

The anniversary brochure emphasized both the hotel's history and amenities. The two ground floor restaurants had been renamed the Charles Room and the John Eager Howard Room. The Howard Room featured a series of historical mural scenes painted during 1936 by Philadelphia painter Verna Rogers. Dancing was a regular attraction in the Charles Room. The ballroom and bar and lounge continued to be popular features, while the addition of an informal coffee shop on the basement level provided a casual dining option increasingly popular for urban hotels. The brochure also mentioned the hotel's in-house laundry, upholstery shop, printing shop, and staff of plumbers. Long standing employees such as Francis Riesner, the well-known maitre d' hotel who had worked at the Belvedere since 1904, were also promoted to emphasize the hotel's standing as a local institution.³⁴

In June 1946 United States Realty-Sheraton Corporation acquired a controlling interest in the Belvedere.³⁵ The name was changed to Sheraton-Belvedere, signifying the hotel's new status as part of twenty-four hotel chain.³⁶ The Sheraton chain was founded by Bostonians Ernest Flagg Henderson and Robert Lowell Moore in 1939. Other links in the Sheraton chain included a number of venerable older hotels such as the former Copley-Plaza in Boston, the former Hotel Biltmore in Providence, and the former Book-Cadillac in Detroit. Manager Albert Fox was retained, perhaps to maintain a well-known face for a business that was outside of local control for the first time.

³²“The Belvedere Hotel Celebrates its Fortieth Anniversary, 1903-1943,” Vertical File, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, MD.

³³“Belvedere Hotel has New Manager” Albert S. Fox Takes Over Reins from John R. Folger, Retiring Executive,” *Baltimore Sun*, 2 December 1938, Vertical File, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, MD.

³⁴Another brochure from this period emphasized the various entertainment rooms, now with air conditioning for the ones on the lower floors. See Vertical File, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

³⁵“Belvedere Changes Hands Once More,” *Baltimore Sun*, 25 June 1946, Vertical File, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

³⁶“Belvedere Hotel Name is Changed,” *Baltimore Sun*, 26 June 1946, Vertical File, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

Sheraton Corporation launched into a series of renovations and updates for the Belvedere. A 50th anniversary booklet published in 1953 highlighted the contrast between old and new:

Still more the social center of Baltimore than ever, the Sheraton-Belvedere has held on to the old, preserving traditions, and maintaining an aura of the festivities and beauty of the past while merging them with all that is new in modern hotel comforts, services, and loveliness.³⁷

Updated bedrooms, including televisions, still maintained their original spacious proportions. The former Palm Room was converted into the Terrace Dining Room. The barroom - known as the Owl Bar since around 1930 - remained intact. The Howard Room was redone as the Jubilee Room. By that same year the chain operated thirty hotels in twenty-four cities, making it the largest in the country.

Slow Decline and Struggle to Revive

A resurgence in the hotel business inspired the Sheraton Corporation make plans during 1954 for a major expansion. The hotel acquired 1017 to 1023 North Charles Street, four lots south of the current hotel to the alley, for an eight-story, 150-room annex. Plans were dropped in 1956 when highway improvement plans for the city threatened to built a new road through the site.³⁸ This would be the last moment of prosperity for the hotel for several decades. In 1964, plans were unveiled to raze the three nineteenth-century houses at 1017, 1019, and 1021 for a hotel parking lot.

The hotel struggled as downtown Baltimore and the former elite neighborhood of Mount Vernon Square experienced a precipitous decline. In 1968 Sheraton sold the Belvedere and seventeen other properties to Wellington Associates of New York.³⁹ It continued to be operated as a hotel but with dwindling occupancy and profits. In 1971, the Sheraton-Belvedere Hotel closed and was briefly reopened as overflow dormitory space for local colleges. By January 1972 the city closed the dormitory due to health, fire, and housing code violations.⁴⁰ The once

³⁷*Sheraton-Belvedere Golden Anniversary*, (1953), 39. Vertical File, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

³⁸John T. Ward "Sheraton-Belvedere Plans Big Expansion Soon," *Baltimore Sun*, 1 December 1954; "Hotel Drops Plans to Build Big Addition - Highway Conflicted with Sheraton-Belvedere's \$3,000,000 Project," *Baltimore Sun*, 8 September 1956. Vertical Files, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

³⁹"Sheraton Sold to New York Company," *Baltimore Sun*, 8 October 1968, Vertical Files, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore.

⁴⁰"City Orders Closing of Belvedere Hotel," *Baltimore Sun*, 23 January 1972, Vertical File, Maryland Historical

grand hotel lay vacant, a victim of vandalism and arson attempts, until Monumental Life purchased the property for \$700,000 as the only bidder at a December 1973 public auction.⁴¹ For the next several years a number of renovation or adaptation schemes were proposed that did not get off the ground.

In December 1975 Monumental Life was finally able to sell the Belvedere to local developer Victor Frenkil, CEO and chairman of Baltimore Contractors, Inc., for \$650,000. Frenkil launched a major renovation project to convert the hotel rooms into 116 luxury apartments and reopen all the public rooms including the Owl Bar and ballroom. The plan also included construction of an enclosed shopping mall and 250-car garage on the open lots south of the hotel.⁴² By August 1978 Frenkil's renovations were nearly complete. Two-thirds of the apartments were occupied and the parking garage recently opened. The 25,000 square foot shopping mall on the lower levels was nearly complete, but not yet occupied by retail tenants. Work was also underway to convert the attic space on the thirteen floor into a cocktail lounge with views of downtown Baltimore through the large windows cut into the mansard roof.⁴³

Frenkil's initial renovation of the Belvedere was estimated to cost \$8 million dollars. The City of Baltimore, recognizing the importance of this large institution in a struggling neighborhood, helped guarantee a private loan for \$4.5 million. However the Belvedere continued to struggle even after its conversion and renovation. In 1981 Frenkil asked the city for another loan to cover the \$1.5 million cost of converting part of the building back into a hotel. Profits were waning and there seemed to be an increasing demand for hotel rooms with the redevelopment of the Inner Harbor area. The hotel continued to operate at a loss and Frenkil relied on his political connections to get additional aid. Despite controversy, incremental funding and financing help continued to be approved by the city under the administration of then Mayor William Donald Schaefer. As of 1987 the hotel owed the city \$5.3 million in principal and interest. A critical article in the *Baltimore Sun* remarked that "city officials justify the expense as protecting their investment in the hotel, which they view as an anchor in the

Society.

⁴¹James D. Dilts, "Monumental Life Buys Belvedere for \$700,000," *Baltimore Sun*, 20 December 1973.

⁴²"New Owner to Remodel Old Belvedere," *Baltimore News American*, 31 December 1975, Vertical File, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore; Thomas Hasler, "Belvedere to Reopen: Hotel's Elegance Returns," *Baltimore Sun*, 26 October 1976. Vertical File, Maryland Historical Society.

⁴³Mark Reutter, "Belvedere Renovation Nearly Done," *Baltimore Sun*, 9 August 1978, Vertical File, Maryland Historical Society.

redevelopment efforts along Charles Street.”⁴⁴ Some apartments, shops, and small offices were still occupied but the building’s future was again uncertain.

A bankruptcy sale in October 1990 to the Miami-based Hertz Group for \$5.5 million would have recouped \$4.5 for Philadelphia-based Meritor Savings, the principle creditor. The City of Baltimore would receive \$1 million and ownership of the restaurant, bars, and food service facilities at the hotel, estimated to be worth \$3.5 million.⁴⁵ However Hertz Group declined to settle on the sale, citing financing troubles. In December Twelfth Street Realty, a holding company for Meritor Savings, bought the entire property for \$3.5 million at another auction.⁴⁶ The city did not receive any of the \$6 million it was owed. In March 1991, Belvedere Realty Corporation acquired the hotel in March 1991 for \$3.8 and began marketing the former apartment units as condominiums. A court-appointed trustee asked for an investigation later that year into possibly unethical connections between developer Judah Hertz and Elliott Sharaby, head of Belvedere Realty. The judge declined to block the pending condominium sales and by August 1991 over half the 112 units had been sold.⁴⁷

By July 1992, Belvedere Realty Corporation had sold 93 condominiums, all three restaurants, the meeting/catering spaces on the ground and twelfth floors, and 92 percent of the commercial space.⁴⁸ Today the Belvedere continues to house condominiums, several restaurants, the Owl Bar and 13th floor cocktail lounge, as well as a number of small offices and retail businesses on the second and eleventh floor of the original building and in the attached shopping mall built in 1978. The twelve floor ballroom is used for weddings and other events. In spite of its financial ups and downs, the Belvedere survives as a key visual and architectural landmark for the Mount Vernon neighborhood.

⁴⁴Ann LoLordo, “City Struggles to Protect Its Stake in the Belvedere,” *Baltimore Sun*, 11 October 1987, Vertical File, Maryland Historical Society. See also Jeff Valentine, “City, State Underwriting Major Part of \$8 Million Belvedere Renovation,” *Baltimore Sun*, 3 March 1977, and “City Loan to Help Belvedere Shift Back to Hotel,” *Baltimore Sun*, 16 July 1981. Vertical Files, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

⁴⁵Martin C. Evans, “Bankruptcy Judge Orders Sale of Belvedere Hotel,” *Baltimore Sun*, 2 October 1990, 10D.

⁴⁶Edward Gunts, “Creditors Buy Beleaguered Belvedere,” *Baltimore Sun*, 28 December 1990, 1B. See also Edward Gunt, “Developer Told to Complete Deal for Belvedere,” *Baltimore Sun*, 21 December 1990, 11D.

⁴⁷Edward Gunts, “Judge Dismisses Move to Halt Belvedere Condo Sales,” *Baltimore Sun*, 21 August 1991, 3B.

⁴⁸Edward Gunts, “Belvedere Bouncing Back: Caterer to Reopen Hotel’s Ballrooms, Banquet Halls,” *Baltimore Sun*, 2 July 1992, 1E. Caterer Tom Stuehler bought the function rooms and restaurateur Dion Dorizas bought the restaurants.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Belvedere represents the application of French Beaux-Arts design to the skyscraper hotel during the first decade of the twentieth century. The tripartite composition of the tower capped by a mansard roof remains a distinctive presence in the Mount Vernon Square vicinity, particularly with its prominent location at the southeast corner of North Charles and East Chase Streets.
2. Condition of fabric: Good. The elaborate decoration of the exterior and the interior public rooms is remarkably intact, with some alterations. The guest room floors have been heavily renovated; the current condominiums retain very few historic features.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Belvedere is nine bays wide (approximately 185 feet east to west along East Chase St.) and five bays deep (approximately 106 feet north to south along North Charles St.). The three center bays including the main entrance are slightly recessed on the East Chase Street elevation. The west section of the hotel is larger than the east, but complimentary facade decoration masks this asymmetry. The rear elevation has a U-shaped light well above the second floor. The light well faces south towards Mount Vernon Square and downtown. This rear elevation has the same cornice, quoins, and window surrounds as the front elevation facing Chase Street, because it is highly visible from downtown and nearby Mount Vernon Square. The thirteen story tower is divided into a granite base containing the public rooms on the ground and mezzanine floors, a brick shaft with terra cotta ornamentation containing eight guest room floors, and an elaborate cornice and mansard roof containing a service floor, twelfth floor ballrooms, and an attic. There are three additional floors below grade. The parking garage/retail addition is attached to the rear elevation with access from the west elevation on North Charles Street.
2. Foundations: Steel and concrete, sheathed with granite. There is smooth granite watertable that rises to the bottom of the first floor windows, approximately four feet.
3. Walls: The exterior walls are sheathed with granite up to the third floor. On two street elevations (north and west) the base has a rusticated appearance with deep horizontal joints between blocks. These two elevations also have a wide terra cotta entablature with frieze of vertical lines alternating with round shields. A heavy cornice with dentils and decorative brackets sits above this entablature. On the north, or main, elevation the three center bays are recessed and the cornice brackets support three decorative terra cotta balconies, one at the center of each section of the elevation. The west, or Charles Street, elevation has a similar decorative

balcony across the three center bays. Above the third floor all four elevations have the same decorative elements. The main shaft of the tower has tan brick walls with heavy terra cotta quoining at the corners as well as at the recessed center bays on the north, or Chase Street, elevation. A terra cotta string course appears between the third and fourth floors. Another terra cotta string course appears between the ninth and tenth floors. The tenth floor window openings are flanked by lion heads made of terra cotta.

4. Structural system, framing: The Belvedere has a riveted steel-frame with brick walls and lightweight cinder concrete floor slabs (cinder arch construction).⁴⁹ The mansard roof is constructed of structural clay tile and steel beams.

5. Stoops, porticoes: Four low stone steps lead to the main entrance, with curved brass railings on either side. Another narrower set of stairs leads to the former ladies entrance one bay to the west. Originally unsheltered, the main entrance was covered with a decorative metal and glass canopy c. 1917. The current bronze canopy is wider than the original one and probably dates to the Sheraton Corporation period. The canopy is cantilevered over the doorway with support from metal tie rods attached to the two pairs of engaged columns flanking the entrance.

6. Chimneys: The Belvedere has four interior chimneys visible above the roof cornice and extending slightly above the top of the mansard roof. These pairs of chimneys flank the recessed center bays on the north elevation and the light well on the south elevation. Similar in appearance, the north elevation chimneys are reddish-tan brick with terra cotta quoins and a heavy terra cotta cap while the south chimneys have tan brick quoins and a terra cotta cap. An assortment of utilitarian ventilation pipes and additional chimneys are visible only when on the roof.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The main doorway is located at the center of the north elevation. Currently parts of the original bronze and marble revolving door frame remain.⁵⁰ This opening is framed by a two-story high triumphal arch motif on the facade. A tall round arch opening is surrounded by quoins and an elaborate curved keystone. The arch is flanked by pairs of engaged columns with drums displaying alternating decorative patterns of lotus blossoms in vertical lines and vermiculated rustication. The doorway entablature has a decorative bracket above each column and the words "HOTEL BELVEDERE" carved into the frieze.

⁴⁹Frederick William Mueller, "The Rebirth of the Belvedere," *Baltimore Engineer* (December 1977): 4.

⁵⁰See Parker and Thomas drawing, "Main Entrance Door, 3/4-Inch Scale Drawings," (5 January 1903), Folder MA8959, Belvedere Hotel Drawings, Maryland Historical Society.

The former ladies entrance one bay to the west has replacement set of double glass and metal doors. The segmental arch opening has a plain keystone and matches the window opening one bay east of the main entrance. Originally this opening had a wood double doors with large areas of etched glazing and a large transom above.⁵¹

A new entrance was added through the addition on Charles Street in the 1970s. This opening has a standard metal and glass commercial door.

b. Windows: The original windows had wood sash, with large single light casements flanked by vertical sidelights for the ground floor public rooms and six over six double hung sash windows for the smaller openings above. The original ground floor windows remain while many have been replaced on the upper floors. The windows on the granite base are cut into the wall surface without surrounds, except keystones and diagonal joints along the top of the larger ground floor windows on the two street elevations. Also on the street elevations the second floor windows have keystones that are integrated into the cornice below the third floor. On the fourth through ninth floors of all four elevations the windows have wide terra cotta surrounds with keystones over each opening, quoins on the sides, and a shallow sill. These windows are arranged in alternating sets of two and three on the side elevations. On the north and south elevations this pattern is changed to one and two windows on the east section to continue the decorative pattern while disguising the smaller dimensions of this section. Smaller windows for the tenth floor are integrated into the entablature below the roof cornice and into the frieze above the roof cornice for the service spaces on the eleventh floor.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The Belvedere has a tall mansard roof sheathed in gray slate. Metal molding, now painted white, covers the corners and top edge of the roof, with decorative volutes at the top of the corners. The top of the roof surface is flat and covered with tar paper and rubber sheathing.

b. Cornice, eaves: The mansard sits on a thick terra cotta cornice with dentils of alternating width. A large cartouche is located at each corner.

⁵¹See photograph published in Kristin Helberg, *The Belvedere and the Man Who Saved It*. (Baltimore: Pumpkin Press, 1986), 10.

c. Dormers: Large integrated brick dormers penetrate the mansard at the twelfth floor ballroom spaces. The dormer hoods are the same wide metal molding as the roof edges. The four largest dormers are located on the north and south elevations, at the center of each section of the elevation. These dormers have tall French windows with a semicircular fanlights in round arch openings. Their massive metal surrounds feature a heavy entablature crowned by a tall triangular pediment. The nine next largest dormers, grouped in threes at the center of the north, east and west elevations, feature a thick segmental arch with a large cartouche and heavy decorative brackets. Eight smaller dormers on the end bays of the east and west elevations, and west section of the north and south elevations have a plainer triangular hood. Two similar dormers within the light well on the south elevation have semicircular hoods. Fixed metal frame windows were added to the north and south slope of the mansard for the cocktail lounge on the thirteenth, or attic, floor.

d. Skylights: The Palm Room directly behind the lobby from the main entrance originally had large skylights with Tiffany glass. The stained glass was replaced with clear at a later date and the skylights have now been removed.

9. Signage: In addition to the original sign carved into the frieze over the main entrance, a neon sign of “The Belvedere” is located on top of each edge of the entrance canopy. Another neon sign at the corner of North Charles and East Chase has “The” arranged horizontally and “Belvedere” arranged vertically. Historic photographs indicate that the Sheraton corporation added these signs in the late 1940s and they originally read “Sheraton Belvedere.”⁵²

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

Basement: Originally housing the kitchens and other service spaces, the basement floor has been heavily renovated into retail/office space.

First Floor: Upon entering the lobby from Chase Street, the visitor is at roughly the center of the rectangular plan. A large dining room/meeting room is located to each side (the Charles and Howard Rooms). Another restaurant, formerly the palm court, is located straight ahead and the Owl Bar is to the left in the southeast corner of the plan.

Second Floor: Originally this floor contained a mix of offices and private dining rooms, many of which are now converted to offices.

⁵²See reprint in Helberg, *The Belvedere and the Man Who Saved It*, 66.

Third-Tenth: Former hotel rooms now combined and converted into 112 condominiums. These floors have a C-shaped plan with the open side facing south. This configuration allowed each hotel room to have an outside window instead of poor ventilation from an enclosed air shaft. The units are accessed from a double-loaded corridor.

Eleventh: Similar in plan to the condominium floors, but housing professional offices. This floor originally housed ventilation equipment.

Twelfth: Accessed via the elevator lobby at the center of the C-shaped plan, the Grand Ballroom and former assembly room (now Platinum Room) are the major spaces on these level. A service kitchen and other support spaces are located here as well.

Thirteenth: Formerly housing the coat and dressing rooms for the public rooms below, this floor now houses a cocktail lounge.

2. Stairways: Stair towers are located near both inside corners of the C-shaped plan. The utilitarian service stair was on the east and a more elaborate wrought iron and marble stair on the west. During the late 1970s renovations, the east service stair was entirely replaced while a portion of the original west stair was retained from the basement to second floor and the twelfth to thirteen floor.⁵³

3. Flooring: The cinder concrete floor slabs are covered with marble in the lobby, decorative square brick in the barroom and tearoom spaces, and hardwood in the restaurants and 12th floor Grand Ballroom. Most of the other rooms have wall-to-wall carpet.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The former guest rooms of the Belvedere now have simple drywall walls and ceilings. Originally the typical guest room had a cement baseboard and plaster walls with a chair rail.⁵⁴ In the public rooms and restaurants on the first and twelfth floors many highly decorative embellishments survive indicative of its French Beaux Arts design. Historic photographs and drawings indicate that many of the faux marble finishes and gilding are not original.

First Floor - Lobby: Here the walls have a silver gray Sienna marble baseboard and a darker marble chair rail at approximately 4 feet high. Some of the pilasters have with

⁵³Mueller, 8.

⁵⁴See Parker and Thomas drawing "Typical Interior Finish in 2nd to 10th Stories Inclusive Excepting. . .," (17 January 1903), Folder MA8959, Maryland Historical Society.

ornate gilded Corinthian capitals. The decorative ceiling has heavy plaster cornices with dentils and a series of rectangular coffers painted contrasting colors. The cornices and coffer beams are decorated with classical motifs such as egg and dart, guilloche, and garlands of flowers, some of which are now gilded. Other decorative touches include engaged columns with Composite capitals flanking the doorways to the dining rooms on each side.

First Floor - John Eager Howard Room (originally the Café): This room has a series of wall murals depicting historical scenes of Baltimore that were painted in 1936. The Howard Room also has an oak wainscot below the murals and a series of vertical paneled piers. The ceiling has a similar decorative treatment to the lobby.

First Floor - Charles Room (originally the Dining Room): This is the most elaborate room on the first floor. There are pairs of engaged Ionic columns with a faux black marble finish flanking several openings, with decorative plaster medallions framed by plaster floral wreaths on the walls above. There is a Glenn Falls black marble baseboard and Washington Marble Company white marble wainscot. Large gilded pier mirrors fill the wall space between window openings. The radiators were hidden behind grilles below the window.

First Floor - Owl Bar: The original decorative terra cotta tile walls appear to survive in this space. The coffered ceiling is covered by a dark wood grille.

Twelfth Floor - Grand Ballroom: The walls feature a series of niches and arched openings to the side aisle. Pairs of Corinthian pilasters, plaster wreaths, and mirrors decorate each pier. The coved ceiling here is approximately 32 feet high with an ornate cornice decorated with dentils, scrolls and foliage. Semi-circular blind arches in the cove are decorated with plaster wreaths, cartouches, and scrolls. Contrasting beams trace the curved of the coved ceiling formed by the mansard roof. There is a Glenns Fall black marble baseboard.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There are a mix of ornate original and plainer replacement doors. Pairs of swinging French doors with fifteen lights each are located at the elevator foyer. Original doorways in the lobby area have tall wood paneled doors and deep openings with thick mitred molding with a decorative scroll and plaster foliage above. Other prominent doorways have surrounds in the form of a classical entablature and pediment with decorative shields and scrolls. The doors for the condominiums are all modern replacements.

b. Windows: Some original wood frame casement windows survive on the lower floors. The six over six wood sash windows on the upper floors have been replaced by single light sash.

6. Decorative features and trim: There are elaborate Caen stone mantels and overmantels for the fireplaces in the two first floor dining rooms. The fireplace in the Howard Room has nearly fully articulated figures in classical dress holding a heavy entablature and broken arch pediment. Classical garlands, wreaths, lion heads, and other ornament decorate this fireplace. A decorative brass letter box is located in the lobby of the Belvedere. It features classical motifs such as an egg and dart cornice, scrolled brackets, and rosettes.

7. Hardware: N/A

8. Mechanical Equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Originally the Belvedere had steam radiators operated by a coal-powered boiler. Huge coal bunkers were located at the sub-basement level under Lovegrove Alley. Heat chambers with exposed steam piping were located on the eleventh floor and used to heat the twelfth. Investigation during the Frenkil renovations in the late 1970s showed the original patented system in place and marked with an identifying plaque reading "The Webster System of Steam Heating, Warren Webster & Co, Camden, NJ." The boiler, coal bunkers, and associated equipment was removed by Frenkil. In the interest of energy efficiency the boilers were replaced by two 200 horsepower York Shipley boilers. These boilers provided heating for the first and twelfth floors, and domestic hot water for whole building. A series of heat pumps provided HVAC to floors two through eleven. The boilers were used to temper the condenser water for the heat pump systems. It is unknown whether this equipment is still in place but likely that a similar combination system of hot water boiler and heat pumps currently is being used.⁵⁵

Many condominiums units also have ornamental gas fireplaces.

Prior to mechanical air conditioning, the Belvedere was cooled by a combination of cross-ventilation from numerous windows and an air circulation system of large (six foot in diameter) fans previously located on the eleventh floor. By the mid- to late-1940s, there was air conditioning for the major public rooms and the first three bedroom floors. It is not known what kind of equipment this system used.

⁵⁵Mueller, 4, 6, 8.

b. Lighting: The Belvedere originally had gas light, but converted to electricity within a few years of opening. The electrical switching equipment was located on the subbasement level until new gear was installed on the basement level during the Frenkil renovation. The original chandeliers and wall sconces were rewired as part of this renovation.⁵⁶

c. Plumbing: The Belvedere originally had a steel tank in the attic filled by water pumped from similar tank in subbasement. The water was then gravity fed to all lower floors for domestic use and fire protection. This system is no longer in use and the tanks were probably removed during the Frenkil renovation. Many of the original hotel rooms featured private bathrooms, a key luxury feature for a turn-of-the-twentieth-century hotel.

d. Elevator: The Belvedere has five elevators. Two passenger elevators are located on the west side of the lobby. Two service elevators and one additional passenger elevator are located on the east.

D. Site: The Belvedere essentially fills the entire footprint of its urban lot. The character of the area is a mix of large and small scale residential and small scale commercial buildings.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural drawings:

Elevation rendering of early design scheme in *Architects and Builders Journal* 2, no. 10 (May 1901): 29.

Parker and Thomas drawings at Maryland Historical Society.

Elevation rendering on cover of *Hotel World* 57, No. 11 (12 September 1903).

B. Early Views:

PP71.28 Rinn Collection, Maryland Historical Society. Perspective view from southeast (rear elevation). Published in *Architectural Record*, March 1905.

C. Interviews:

Erlanger, Steven R., property manager. Interview by author, 11 April 2003, Baltimore.

⁵⁶Mueller, 6.

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The Belvedere Hotel Celebrates Its Fortieth Anniversary, 1903-1943. Booklet in vertical files,
Maryland Room, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Belvedere Hotel Company drawing files, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland

Only a sampling of original Parker and Thomas drawings and those from later renovations by Taylor and Fisher in 1945 were accessible at the time this report was being researched.

Belvedere Hotel Corporation Papers, 1904-1970, 62 boxes, University of Baltimore, Baltimore, Maryland

This collection contains a variety of textual records such as guest ledgers, correspondence, and financial records.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Research on the Belvedere Hotel was conducted by HABS historian Lisa Pfueller Davidson to support an effort to document prominent and significant buildings in the Mount Vernon Square Historic District of Baltimore during 2003-2004.