

**FACADES**

# Ornate Landmark Gets Fixed, Three Buckets at a Time

**A** one-person work-bucket rigging system, custom fabricated to move up, down, left, right, in and out, is both the saving grace and a limitation of the facade restoration of an ornate Pittsburgh landmark. By the end of the project this year, contractors will have restored 64,000 sq. ft. of Two Mellon Bank Center's exterior.

The \$8.5-million project is taking five years from design to finish. Slow progress is due to a restriction on using more than three buckets at one time, thanks to limits on loads and stresses on the roof structure, says Dave Sinclair, project manager for the local general contractor, Graciano Corp. But the bucket system avoided swathing the occupied building in scaffolding. Because of noise restrictions during the workday, much heavy work was done during a night shift.

The 1918 building, designed by F. J. Osterling, is chock full of decorative terra-cotta cornices, pinnacles, finials, pediments, parapets, balustrades and gargoyles. Using glass-fiber reinforced concrete, crews are replacing about 650

terra-cotta pieces on each face, in addition to many steel angles, pins and channels. Work also involves replacing some 2,500 terra-cotta pieces on each cathedral-

like penthouse "building" and much of the steel framing of the mansard roof's 38 dormers. The limestone facade is not being replaced.



▲ Pittsburgh Gem. Leaky mansard roof repaired slowly.

The roof leaked since completion, though it had a tarred waterproofing layer behind the terra-cotta. Architect Raths, Raths and Johnson used the buckets first to examine the building and determine the scope of the work.

The 11-story building had been covered with a tar preservative, which made cleaning difficult. But the toughest part of

the job involved preserving the building while repairing it. "It was difficult trying to save the terra-cotta while trying to keep water out of the main part of the building,"

says George Mulholland, the job's local consulting engineer. ■



▲ Detail. Roof is getting 7,600 new ornaments.

By Jonathan Barnes in Pittsburgh