

Lake Cliff Tower

Lake Cliff Tower, originally named Cliff Towers, is a twelve story landmark recently brought out of moth balls and converted into luxury condominiums. On Colorado Boulevard overlooking Lake Cliff Park, the building is an icon at the gateway to Oak Cliff. Opened in 1932 as a hotel and luxury apartments, it became senior housing in the 1950's, a nursing home in the '60's, and closed in 2000 when the owner could not afford repairs and code compliance.

Evergreen Realty Partners, the developer, took advantage of \$4.1 million in tax increment financing from the City of Dallas and began redevelopment in 2004. The results are a beautifully resurrected masterpiece with restored plastered lobby, theater room, billiards area, wine vault with private lockers, swimming pool, outdoor deck with fire pit, and 54 hip and swanky condominiums from 895 square feet to 2,000 square feet.

Lake Cliff was created in 1888 a social club known as the club known as the Llewellyn Club. The Club excavated the lake on the south side of the street car line that ran along Colorado Boulevard from downtown Dallas. In 1906 Charles Mangold and John F. Zang bought the land around Lake Cliff, and built an amusement park. In 1909 Charles Mangold and his wife, Anna, purchased five acres of wooded land on a hill on the north side of Colorado and built their dream home. The hill had an incredible view to the northeast over the Trinity River to downtown Dallas.

The Lake Cliff Amusement Park was too expensive to operate and the land and lake were sold to the city in 1913 for a public park.

After enjoying their residence for a number of years, Mangold convinced his wife of the concept of "sharing" the beautiful site with others and went to Chicago to hire architects, Albert S. Hecht and Robert G. Williams, specialists in Italianate architecture. They designed a twelve story building in the style of an Italian villa. It took nine months to build and cost \$1,000,000.00.

"The blue skies and climate of Texas are similar to those of Italy and such a building motif seems most suitable to create the atmosphere of a stately home that enjoys seclusion yet is situated in the heart of a metropolis", said Robert G. Williams, as quoted in the Dallas Morning News' Cliff Towers special advertisement section of October 13, 1929.

Williams also asserted, "We believe we have made Cliff Towers the finest apartment building of its kind in the Southwest, and it embodies the latest features in utility, decoration, and furnishings to be found in newer apartments in Chicago and New York.

The exterior of the first seven floors is red brick with cast stone and brick quoins. The eighth and ninth floors carry out the Italian villa motif with stucco walls and cast stone trim. The observatory tower has three open stucco arches on the North and South sides and is topped with a red barrel tile roof. Its floor is colored concrete with a compass design in the center.

The stone spandrel panels between the windows of the 10th and 11th floors were originally black. The building was originally entered from both the north and south. The Lake Cliff approach was across a broad terrace of black and white cement squares. From Zang entry was through a wide driveway gate flanked by stone columns with Italian lamps and an adjoining gate lodge. On this side was a two-story garage for 250 cars clothed in Italian farmhouse style.

The original lobby with its cast stone Italian mantle had four crystal chandeliers. Off the lobby were a ladies powder room, a coffee shop, a beauty shop, and a card room. The building originally offered 104 apartment homes with four choices of floor plans – a four room, three room, two room, and one room unit types. A much-promoted feature using a slot in the cabinet behind the bathroom mirrors for disposal of razor blades.