



The Ben Hur Building Fascade

Historic Preservation • Crawfordsville, Indiana

The Ben Hur Building

— Established 1911 • Luxury apartment conversion • Custom hardware recreation & engineering

When a landmark's original decorative hardware was stolen mid-renovation, FR International recreated it in days — then engineered a custom latch solution to preserve doors that were more than a century old.

When the historic Ben Hur Building underwent a major renovation into luxury apartments, preserving its architectural heritage was a critical requirement. Redevelopment funding required that as many original elements as possible be retained — including the existing wood doors and their distinctive decorative hardware.

Then the unexpected happened.

The Challenge · The Solution

A theft that changed the project

During construction, the building was broken into and nearly all of the original decorative door hardware was stolen — ornate escutcheons and custom knobs engraved with the building's iconic "TBH" initials. With virtually no replacement options available, the architect asked FR International what seemed an impossible question: could this hardware be recreated?

Recreating the original

Within hours of receiving photographs, measurements, and historical details, FRI's design team began digitally recreating the hardware. In under three days, a faithful reproduction was designed and turned into physical prototypes using rapid 3D printing. Samples were compared against the few surviving originals; minor refinements to proportion and detail were made before a second round of prints.

"Within ten days of the initial phone call, the team had developed a replica that closely matched the character of the original hardware."

<3

Days to first
prototype

2

Prototype
rounds

10

Days concept to
final prototype



Component study — prototype escutcheon, knob & custom latch adapter



Finished product — installed on an original 1911 door

A century-old door problem

The reused doors had been modified decades earlier for a 1940s mortise lock, leaving an oversized five-inch latch-edge preparation that no commercial tubular latchset could fill. Rather than ask the contractor to alter historic doors, FRI's engineers designed a custom adapter and latch stabilizer — installing a commercial-grade tubular latch securely while completely filling the preparation, eliminating field modifications and cutting installation time.

Preserving history

The project shows how preservation takes more than reproducing beautiful hardware — it demands creative engineering and a willingness to solve problems with no off-the-shelf answer. FRI helped restore a piece of Indiana history while equipping the building for decades of future use.

To discuss a custom hardware challenge, contact FR International at **1-800-238-9711**

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