

Dome Caps Palace Restoration

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DAVIS ISLANDS - With the exception of exterior lights and some landscaping work, a \$1.5 million restoration of the Palace of Florence has been completed.

Hamilton Jones, president of Gaspar Properties, used old postcards and photographs from the Burgert Bros. collection to guide restoration of the Mediterranean Revival-style apartment building at 45 Davis Blvd.

Twenty of the building's 28 units have been leased. Jones said he's not surprised that there are still vacancies, saying apartments in general have had a tougher time leasing since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Earlier this week, an open-air dome was installed on the palace's northern tower, and a canopy has been placed over the building's rooftop garden.

The apartment-hotel began operation in May 1926. The homelike, private apartments boasted hotel conveniences, including telephones in each apartment with a 24-hour switchboard, and daily maid and janitor service. Patrons could rent apartments for a day, week, month or year - with lower prices charged during the off-season.

Cutline: Tribune photos by BRUCE HOSKING

(C) A crane places an open-air dome and weather vane atop the north tower of the Palace of Florence on Davis Islands earlier this week.

(C) Jerry Wolaver of Custom Canvas Structures gets some installation guidance via cellphone as the dome is put into place atop the tower.