

Original Ironwork by Baguès Frères

We were approached by a local architect and asked to produce a balcony railing for the bar and restaurant: Public House 49 located on Main Street in Patchogue, NY. The design chosen was loosely based upon an Art Deco styled railing panel which was originally exhibited in the Exposition *Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, held in Paris in 1925. At the time, this was an extremely important cultural event and brought Art Deco design into the forefront. Needless to say, we were extremely excited to have the opportunity to build a railing of this level of beauty and refinement.

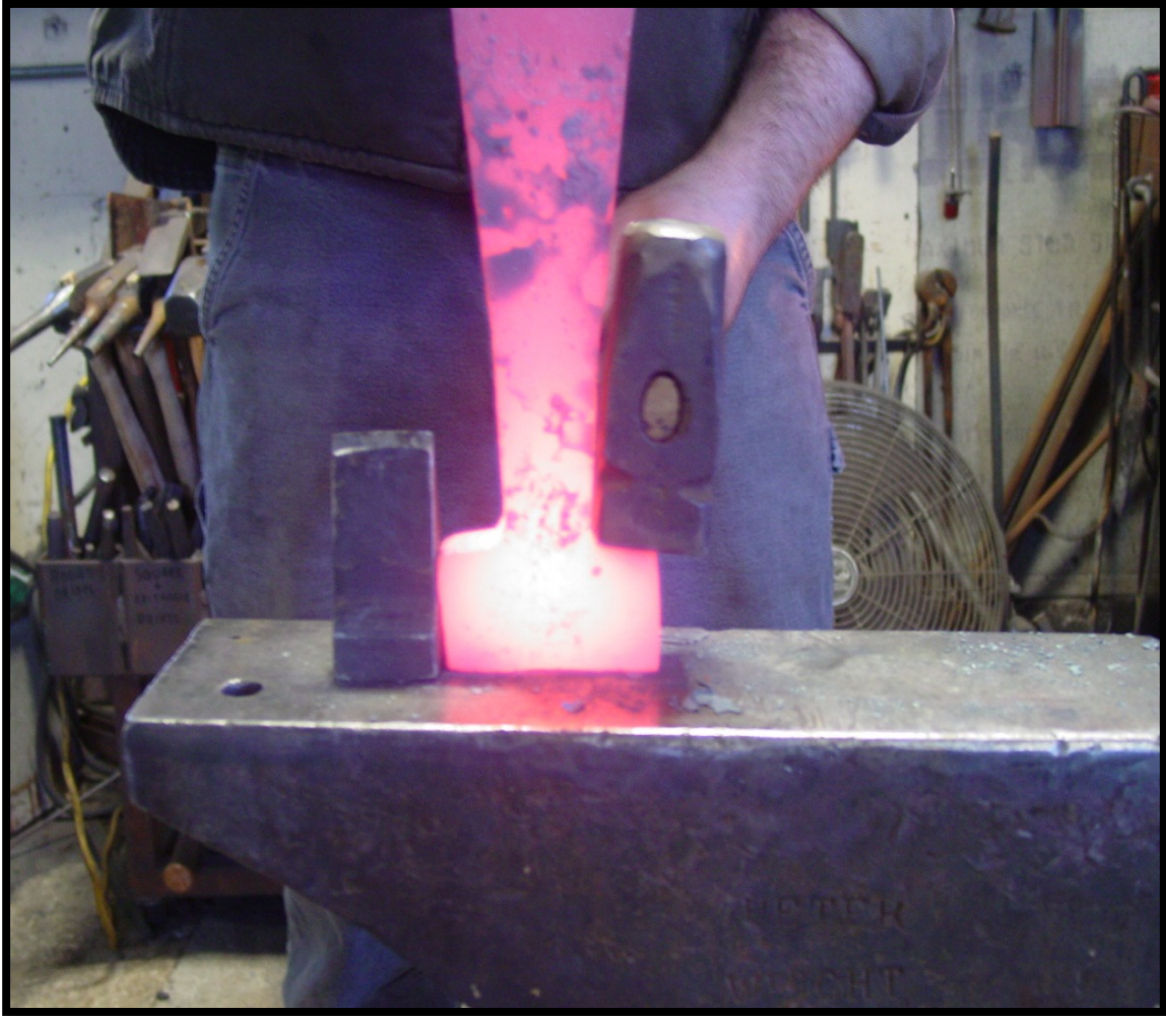


This is a photograph of blacksmith/partner, Timothy Miller (Spirit Ironworks, Inc.) working on the billet that will become one of the decorative urns pictured in the center of the rail. He is using a 135 lb. pneumatic hammer to taper the billet. The steel is heated to approximately 1900°f to make it malleable.





The blacksmith and his helper (also known as the striker), are using a tool called a fuller to create a shoulder between the base and the stem of the urn. This is how blacksmiths in the past worked before the invention of power forging equipment. This method is still relevant today in artistic work.



The foot has been established and is being cleaned up with a set hammer. It is called such because it is set upon the work and struck with another hammer. All of this work is being performed on an anvil that is over 150 years old.





This is a close up shot of the ram's horn scrolls that are attached to the top of the decorative urns. Several special tools were required to forge these scrolls. These tools had to be hand made in our shop.



Meanwhile, our fabricator was assembling the forged pieces and welding them into the frame. In this photograph, you can see the finished forged urn. The border is a Greek key design. This is a traditional design which dates back thousands of years. Also shown are the hammered bronze panels before they received their patina. All visible welds have been ground smooth.





Here is full shot of the rail on our layout table. At this point, most of the ironwork is in place. It is now waiting for its bronze cap rail and repoussé panels. Many hours of careful welding, grinding and fitting have gone into the project to get it this point.



Here, the bronze cap moulding is being bent to match the profile of the rail.  
They are using a large propane torch to soften the bronze so it will bend  
easily.





This photograph gives an overhead view of the process. Here you can see one person heating while the other is carefully bending the bronze to match the curve of the railing.



Shown in this photograph are the basic tools used to produce the repoussé panels for the rail. In a traditional ornamental metal shop, repoussé would be a trade unto itself. The artisan uses special hammers and stakes to produce custom ornaments in sheet metal. Shown in the upper right of the photograph are two of the bronze rosettes made for this railing. Repoussé has been largely supplanted by cheaply made stamped parts. The difference in quality is evident even to the most casual observer.





Here is a close up of the almost finished repouseé panel in place. At this point, the railing has been fully welded and sanded smooth and is ready for a zinc metalized coating that will resist rust and decay for decades, followed by prime and painting.



In this photograph, blacksmith, designer and partner; Rachel Miller (Spirit Ironworks, Inc.) and lead fabricator; Frank stopped for a moment to pose with the rail. At this point, it is receiving its final touches. They are using a chemical patina process to darken the bronze in order to give it an aged look.





Here, the railing takes flight! Compliments of a local rigger. Our work truck and Main Street Patchogue in the background.



The railing is now in place. It is being bolted to a heavy steel platform that we built and installed earlier in the project. This platform was made from heavy steel plate weighing over 1200 lbs.





Here is the finished rail in place. We are extremely proud of this project. No simulated craftsmanship, substitutions or corners cut, just good, honest handmade work. Next time you're on Main Street in Patchogue, NY, look up and think of us!