

The Best of Both Worlds

Dumbwaiter modernization enhances efficiency of historic Chicago landmark.

by Jim Piper

The Women's Athletic Club of Chicago was the first of its kind in the U.S., and has been at its current home along the city's Magnificent Mile since the early 1920s. Founded as a club where women could exercise and enjoy a leisurely meal among friends, the club remains an architectural treasure that has adapted to contemporary times by developing new programs and enhancing its facilities. The stunning interior hosts events such as weddings and meetings, while still providing

state-of-the-art modern health and fitness amenities for its members.

Matot was recently asked to partner with Parkway Elevators of Chicago on a dumbwaiter modernization project at the facility. The twin dumbwaiter equipment is primarily utilized for food service for six floors, as the kitchen area is tucked in a far corner of the building. The dumbwaiters are the most efficient method for transporting food between floors, as there are no freight or passenger elevators near the kitchen. Additionally, keeping staff at their locations, rather than carrying hot plates of food from floor to floor, adds to the kitchen's efficiency.

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The new doors



The original doors



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The original dumbwaiter equipment had been installed in the early 1950s and was in need of a near-complete rebuild. After years of reliable service, the system had become a maintenance headache for

both onsite personnel and elevator mechanics. Doors would jam, the switching hardware was worn out, and parts were increasingly difficult to come by. Additionally, any food-service

equipment eventually requires an upgrade, as items often spill during transport, quickly shortening the life of any hardware below.

Matot's Engineering Manager Josh Lilly and Senior Vice President of Sales Jim Peskuski worked closely with Parkway Elevators to devise a modernization plan for both dumbwaiters. The team was able to devise a creative side-by-side machine-room design to replace the original double-drum machine, despite tight space restrictions and some required modifications to the machine-room floor. With assistance from Parkway Elevators' mechanics, the modernized equipment was installed over the course of a few days without a hitch. This included the installation of new doors at each landing, in addition to the two new cars. Matot is proud to have assisted with a project for such a historic building in our own hometown.



Jim Piper is executive vice president at Matot.