

NEW ORLEANS

HOMES

2020
DESIGN
MASTERS

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MODERN FAMILY

OUR
SPECTACULAR
NEW BUILD
OF THE YEAR

INTERIOR DESIGNER
SUSAN CURRIE'S
COLORFUL RETREAT

AUTUMN 2020



ILLUMINATING TRADITION

Four generations of craftsmen keep the handmade lanterns flickering at Bevelo Gas & Electric Lights



FOR DECADES, THE ENCHANTING FLICKER OF FRENCH QUARTER lanterns has illuminated our courtyards, homes and boulevards. With equal parts romance, history and utility these iconic fixtures provide a timeless elegance to our lives.

Bevelo Gas & Electric Lights is a fourth-generation, family-owned business and the oldest continuously operating gas light manufacturer in the country. For 75 years, the business has blended history, craftsmanship and technology to create these architectural treasures.

When Andrew Bevelo, Sr. worked at Higgins Industries, he helped build the famed landing craft for the D-day invasion. Ten days after World War II ended, Bevelo opened the doors to Bevelo Metal Crafts. A highly skilled craftsman, he did everything from repairing chandeliers to making surgical equipment.

Customers often brought him streetlights to repair. Some of those lights were more than a century old and were onerous to fix. Bevelo put his mechanical background to use and began using rivets to keep the lamp pieces together.

"This was his historic contribution to gas lighting," says his grandson and current owner, Drew Bevelo.

But Bevelo's contribution to the lantern didn't end there. In the early 1960s, renowned Louisiana architect, A. Hays Town was looking for a light fixture to enhance one of his designs. The story goes that he asked Bevelo if he could make a specific light fixture and Bevelo answered: "If you can draw it, I can make it."

The original French Quarter Lantern was born. Today, all Bevelo lights — which range in price from \$200 for simple lamps to \$5,000 for larger installations — are still handmade and sourced in the United States.

"Sheets of copper are cut with hand and foot shears," Bevelo says. "The brackets are hand welded. The nearly one hundred rivets per light are tapped in with ball-peen hammers."

Drew Bevelo learned the business from his uncle and when he took over, he trained new artisans, opened new warehouses, manufacturing facilities and a museum featuring two working coppersmiths and his grandfather's original worktable.

He also expanded the number of light styles the company made to more than five hundred. They are all designed to operate continuously with Bevelo's patented natural-gas "batwing" flame burner, which costs just a few dollars a month to operate.

In honor of its 75 year anniversary, all lanterns will bear a craftsman's Maker's Mark. This mark is one of the earliest forms of trademarking and has been used for centuries by craftsmen to claim responsibility for their work.

"It's very satisfying to have a tangible product to show for my efforts at the end of the day," says John Greco, craftsman and Bevelo's creative director. "The thing I love most about my job is knowing that my craftsmanship will be on display and appreciated by our clients every day."

—BY PAMELA MARQUIS