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**SAIA** SCAFFOLD & ACCESS  
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

A low-angle photograph of a tall, multi-story building under renovation. The building is covered in a dense network of metal scaffolding and safety netting. The sky is a clear, pale blue. Bare tree branches are visible in the upper right corner. The building's facade is light-colored with many windows, some of which are partially obscured by the scaffolding.

# FLYING HIGH AT 1900 RITTENHOUSE SQUARE

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ON THE  
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# *FLYING HIGH AT 1900 RITTENHOUSE SQUARE*

MAST CLIMBERS PROVIDE  
ACCESS FOR THE  
RESTORATION OF A  
HISTORIC LANDMARK.

**BY ERIK HIGHLAND**



**I**t's up there. Two hundred feet to be exact. Passing below one might think that these aluminum and steel structures are permanently fixed at the top.

But how did they get there? Why are they up there? And when are they coming down?

Given everything that's happened this past year, these mast climbers represent more than just another job.

They show us that positivity, perseverance, and innovation are all returning to a city that was closed for all construction during the COVID-19 outbreak. They also show that no matter the

obstacle, it can be overcome with faith and imagination. It all starts with an idea, sometimes even a question, and a little bit of encouragement.

The giant machines, soaring 200 feet above Philadelphia's renowned Rittenhouse Square neighborhood, span two sides of the building and are parked at the top of the historic high-rise at 1900 Rittenhouse. This building, completed in 1923, has some of the city's most expensive and prestigious condominiums. It is a landmark property that requires constant upgrades and maintenance.

The general contractor approached Superior Scaffold Services after other companies had been unable to come up with a workable access solution. Several options were considered, from swing stages to transport platforms. In the end, Superior Scaffold recommended the use of the MC 7000, a mast climber capable of handling up to 12,000 pounds on one unit. There were two sides that needed a full parapet restoration as well as an exterior restoration, and so one



## Superior Scaffold Services

- SAIA Member

Superior Scaffold Services is located in Bensalem, Pennsylvania. Founded as Waco Scaffolding of Philadelphia in 1952 by Albert Bianchini, today the company erects scaffolding and shoring systems throughout the tri-state region. Learn more at [www.superiorscaffold.com](http://www.superiorscaffold.com).

most climber was used on each side of the building. One of the units is 70 feet long and spans the entire front of the facade, the other is 60 feet long, and both are right smack in the center of downtown.

How would these giant machines work on a narrow sidewalk in a very busy, upscale part of town? People live in that building and have to come and go about their business as usual.

Superior Scaffold first had to create a system that would let tenants and pedestrians travel safely below but would also allow the massive mast climbers to be installed directly on top of the canopy. The sidewalk was too narrow to place the units right next to the building and put the overhead protection system in front of them - like Superior often does. The solution was to use standard canopy frames throughout. But beneath the sections where each mast climber was to set, Superior used shoring frames and shortened the length of the scaffold bays to increase the total capacity. This method allows the weight of the mast climbers, plus the workers and material, traveling up and down safely each day, to set directly on top of the canopy below, and allows the residents and pedestrians to come and go safely. Problem solved.

So now, soaring high over the streets and pedestrians below, sit two mast climbing units spanning the entire facade on two sides, delivering new brick and life to the aging structure. Restoration and masonry crews are currently replacing and rebuilding the aging parapet. They have to take down the old brick and replace it with new. These twin mast units can hold a great deal of weight, and because of their increased capacity fewer trips to the ground and back are necessary.

The mast climbers allow the crews to focus on the job at hand – restoration. The big picture for the general contractor and masonry contractors is saving money. People were skeptical and said it couldn't be done. A little faith, creativity, perseverance, and cooperation got this job off the ground – literally!

Once the parapet has been fully restored, crews will move down the face of the building doing an entire restoration. These giant mast climbers will be flying high for at least eight months on this job and then off to help another dream become a reality.

### About the Author



Erik Highland is Marketing Director for Superior Scaffold. Contact him at (215) 743-2200 or visit [www.superiorscaffold.com](http://www.superiorscaffold.com).