

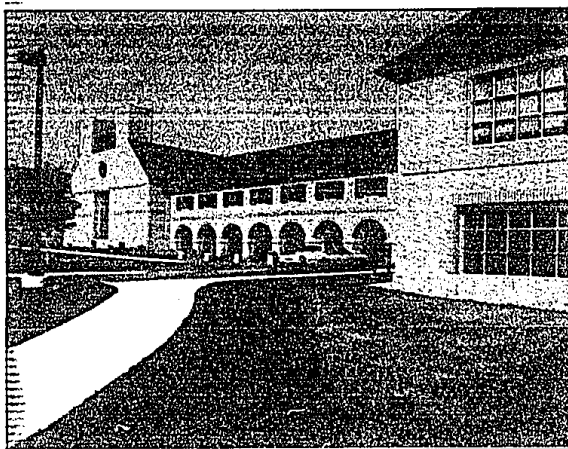
Building Scene

Marilyn Fitchett editor/591-2300



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The Michigan National Bank headquarters building in Farmington Hills is an example of traditional American architecture, calling to mind colonial Williamsburg.

By Dale Northrop
special writer

Architecture has been viewed as a form of advertising. Just as the style of house we live in confers socio-economic identification, so too does commercial architecture confer business success.

Today's office buildings are conscious of corporate identification, particularly when the corporation builds them. Such is the case with Michigan National Bank's headquarters in Farmington Hills, designed by Luckenbach/Ziegelman of Birmingham, and Standard Federal Bank in Troy by the WBDC Group of Grand Rapids.

Although both newly opened headquarters were built to house banking operations, the contrast in architectural styles is unmistakable.

Michigan National's complex consists of four, 2 1/2-story buildings comprising 283,000 square feet at a cost of \$31 million. Set on 25 acres, it all has the ambience of American architectural vernacular: colonial Williamsburg and Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. The architects, however, were confronted with making traditional architecture satisfy the needs of a contemporary banking operation.

Within one of the buildings is an atrium light well below which is the 9,000-square-foot trading floor, a necessary part of any banking operation. On the wall is a commodious screen that flashes the Dow-Jones news. The screen apprises the bank's brokers of the current market when they're not looking at their computers, contemplating the next transaction on the programmed domestic and international market screens.

The years 1972-82 saw a tremendous growth of Michigan National. The building of headquarters served to unite the administrative activities that had been scattered in eight suburban locations.

STANDARD FEDERAL rises six stories above Big Beaver Road, each floor set back and suggesting the appearance of a streamline Egyptian step-pyramid clad in polished granite. The horizontal spans are cantilevered out over the ribbons of windows affording an outside view from within the largely unobstructed office areas. The 450,000-square-foot, \$80 million structure sits on five acres of the 27-acre site. Some of the additional acreage is given over to the open-air parking, a parking structure and retention ponds.

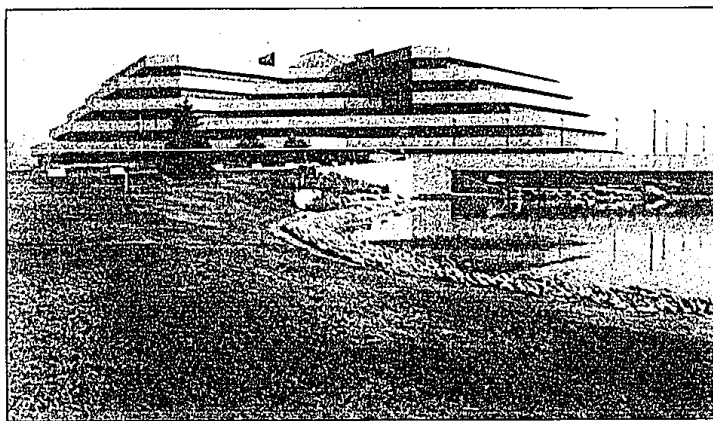
The interior consists of a six-story atrium space with projecting convex glass parapets reminiscent of New York's Guggenheim Museum. The space greatly facilitates an expansive feeling to employees at their work stations. The overall plan allows for a balance of artificial and natural light and an ease of intra- and inter-office communication.

The office arrangement is based on product distribution: first floor — banking, brokerage and consumer lending; second floor — mortgage lending. A centralized computer facility serves the headquarter's personnel and entire branch system.

Despite the differences in architecture, Michigan National's and Standard Federal's headquarter buildings can be viewed as state-of-the-art structures and prototypes for American business projecting into the 21st century.

Dale Northrop is an architectural historian and college professor who lives in Troy.

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The Standard Federal Bank headquarters in Troy suggests the appearance of a streamline Egyptian step-pyramid clad in polished granite.

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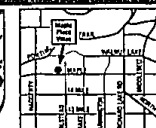
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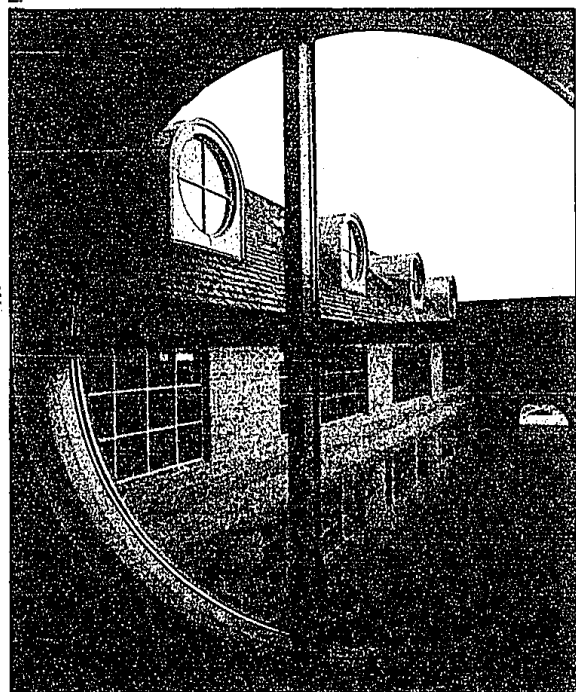


photo by CHRISTOPHER CLARK & ASSOCIATES

These massive circular windows offer a view of the brick courtyard at Michigan National.