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Bulletin

Michigan  
Society of  
Architects

August 1973  
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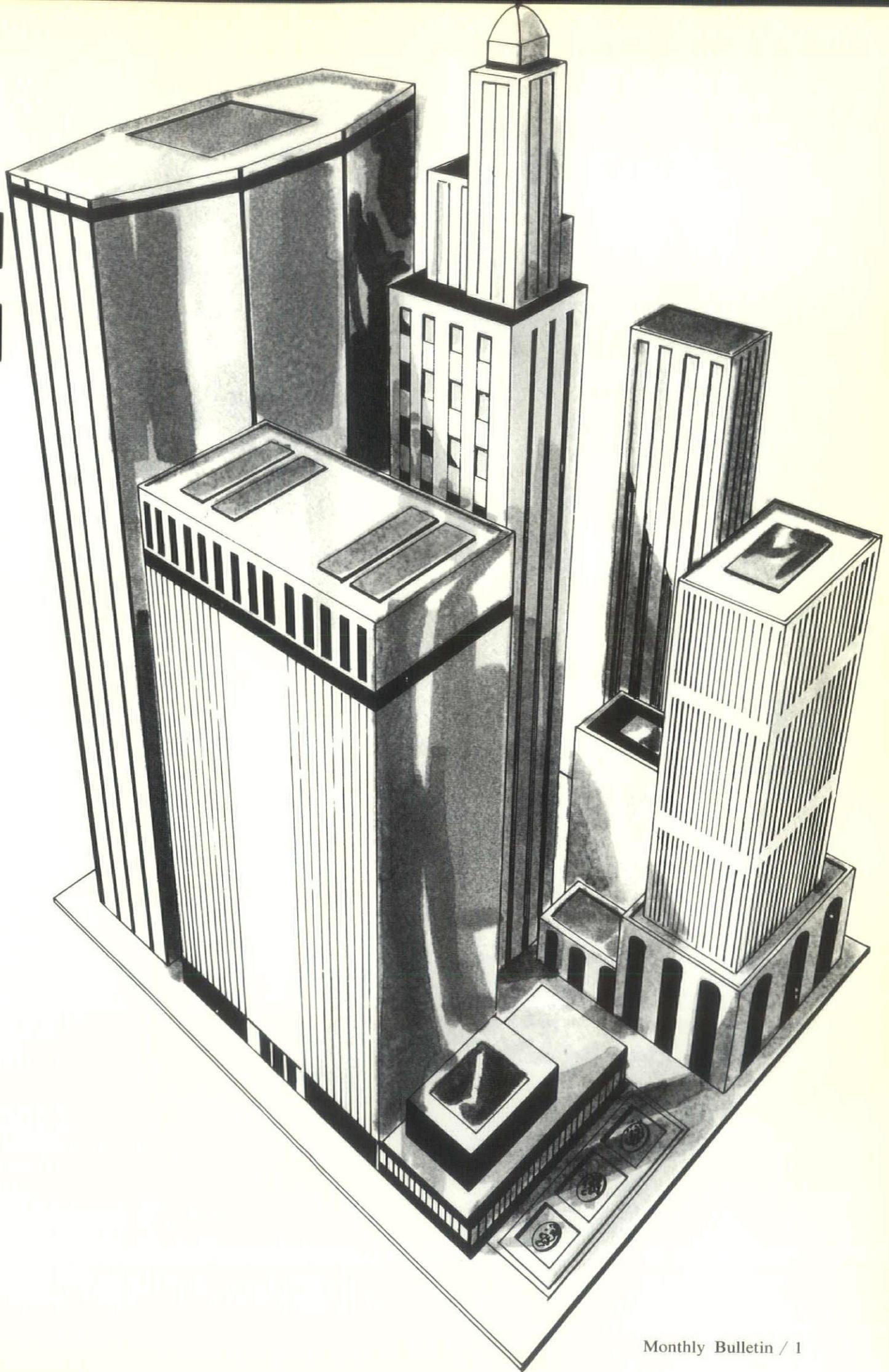
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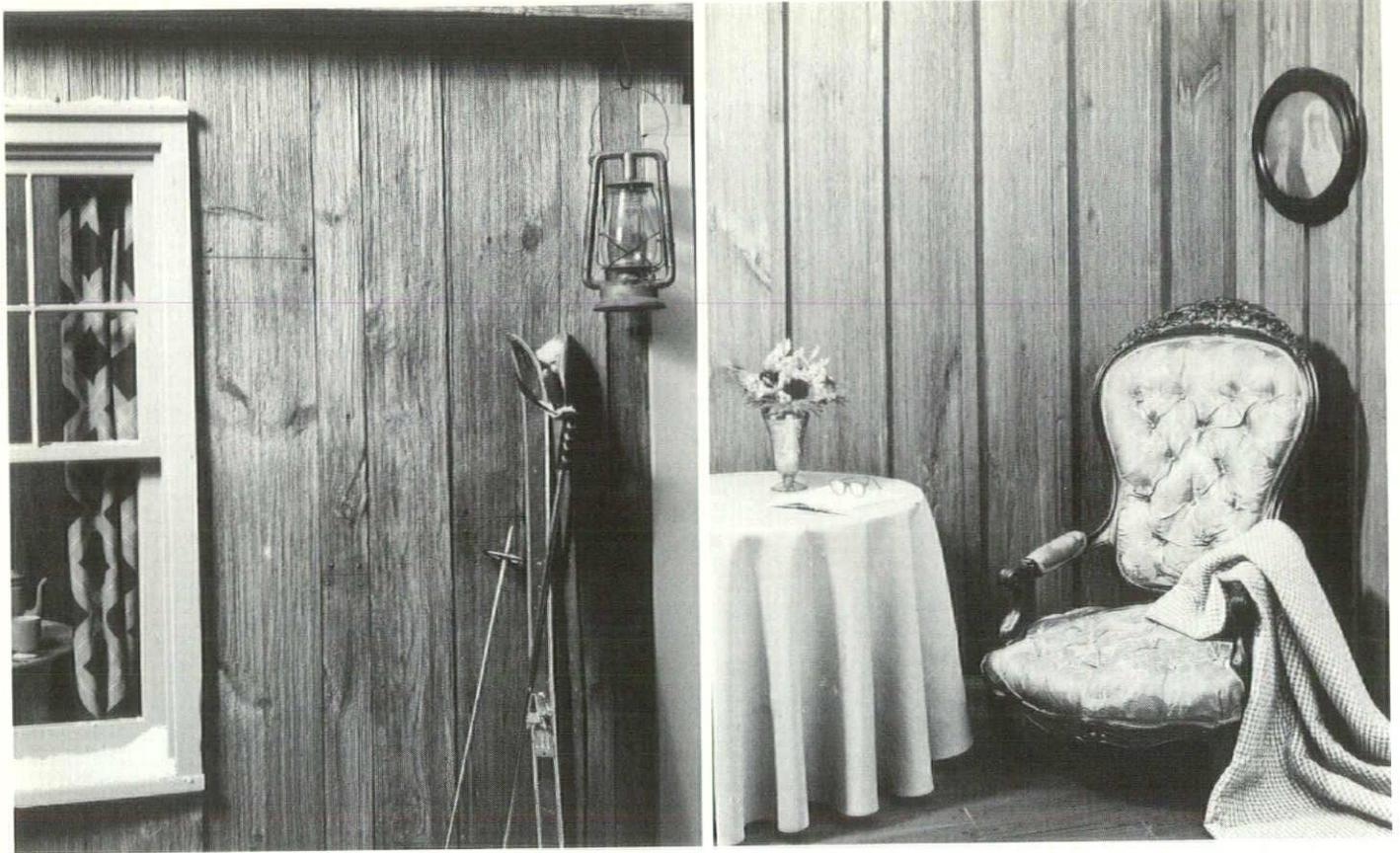


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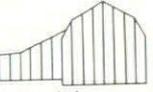
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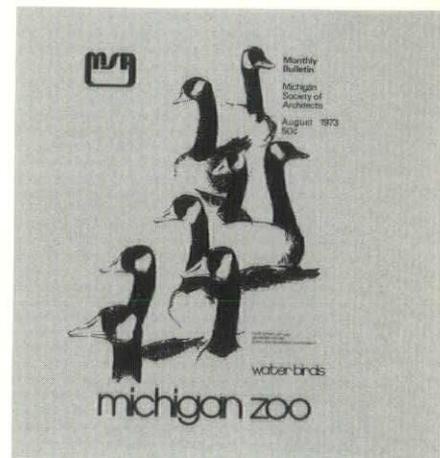


# Monthly Bulletin

Vol. 48 No. 8  
August, 1973

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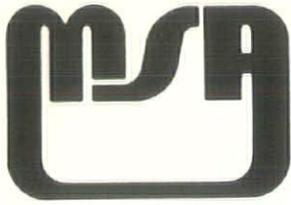
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## William Buck Stratton & the Arts and Crafts Movement in Detroit

The work of William B. Stratton is described in Hawkins Ferry's book on "The Building of Detroit", yet his name is unknown to most of today's generation of Detroit architects, and his contribution to Detroit's architectural heritage, though modest, is largely unappreciated.

The firm of Stratton and Baldwin, according to Hawkins Ferry, was the first in Michigan to be made up of men trained in American Architectural Schools. William Buck Stratton, from Ithaca, New York, received his degree at Cornell University in 1881, and Frank Baldwin of Galesburg, Illinois, completed a 3 year course at M.I.T. in 1890. Both men, according to Ferry, moved to Detroit and became partners in 1893. In 1911, the firm was dissolved when Baldwin established an office in Washington, D.C. Arthur K. Hyde and D. J. V. Snyder were subsequently associated with Stratton during different periods.

Detroit, at the turn of the century, was confronted with growing industrialization and with the rapid change from a relatively small city to a large metropolis. One of the immediate problems was the building activity made necessary by new industries and the influx of workers to the city. Architectural standards, Ferry points out, were already



affected by the new machine made ornament and were rapidly sinking beneath a renewed eclecticism. In the midst of this confusion, a small group of Detroiters attempted to point the way to honest craftsmanship and sound design through the newly formed Society of Arts and Crafts under the leadership of George Booth.

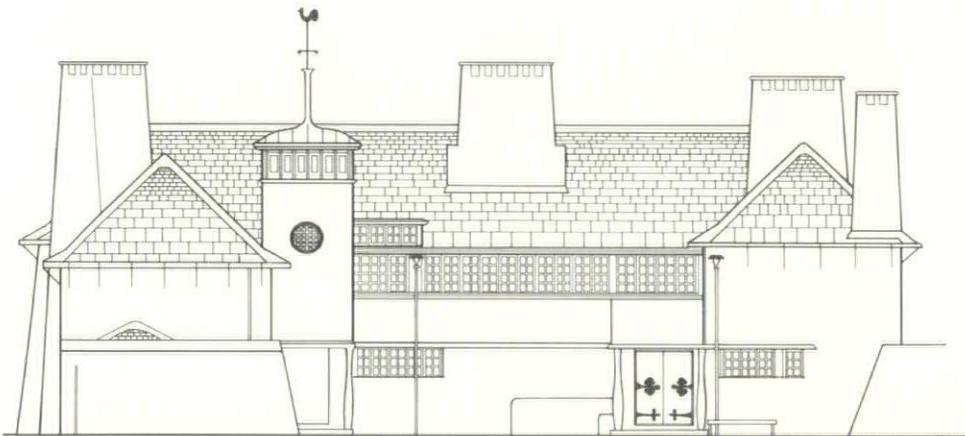
The influence of such English Architects as Charles Voysey (1857-1941), Norman Shaw, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and others was apparent in the work of leading Detroit architects of that time. Most of these men were members of the Detroit Society of Arts & Crafts and took a keen interest in the creative arts of England which had been largely influenced by that violent machine hater, William Morris, who believed that not until the artist became a craftsman again, and the craftsman an artist, would art be

saved from annihilation by the machine. Morris attributed to mechanization and subdivision of labor all the evils of the age. Yet he laid the foundation of the modern movement by discrediting any art created by individual genius for a small group of connoisseurs, and constantly held that art matters only "if all can share it".

That the influence of the architecture of Voysey, with its effortless, unaffected nature and almost complete lack of period detail, together with others inspired by William Morris' philosophy, was not lost on Detroit architects of that time can easily be seen. Active in supporting the Society of Arts & Crafts was Albert Kahn, a founding member. While the tastes of many of his wealthy clients was not necessarily conducive to development of the "cottage style", as the architecture of the Arts & Crafts movement came

to be known, the oppressive souvenirs of the middle ages, as Ferry alludes to them, all but vanished when he built his own house on the corner of Mack & John R. in 1906, and to a degree, were similarly absent in the large rambling mansion designed by Albert Kahn in 1909 for George Booth at Cranbrook. The same influences prevailed and were further elaborated upon in the 1920's by Eliel Saarinen in his earlier Cranbrook School Buildings. The exquisite craftsmanship, with overtones of Scandinavian elegance and a profusion of non-traditional detail is quite consistent with Saarinen's earlier work in Finland, especially his own villa at Hvittrask, near Helsinki, which recalls the English work of 30-40 years earlier.

The most notable examples of Stratton's work of this period which relate so closely to the Arts & Crafts movement, were the Pewabic



*Charles F. Annesley  
Voysey: House at  
Colwall, Malvern, 1893*



*Albert Kahn  
Residence*

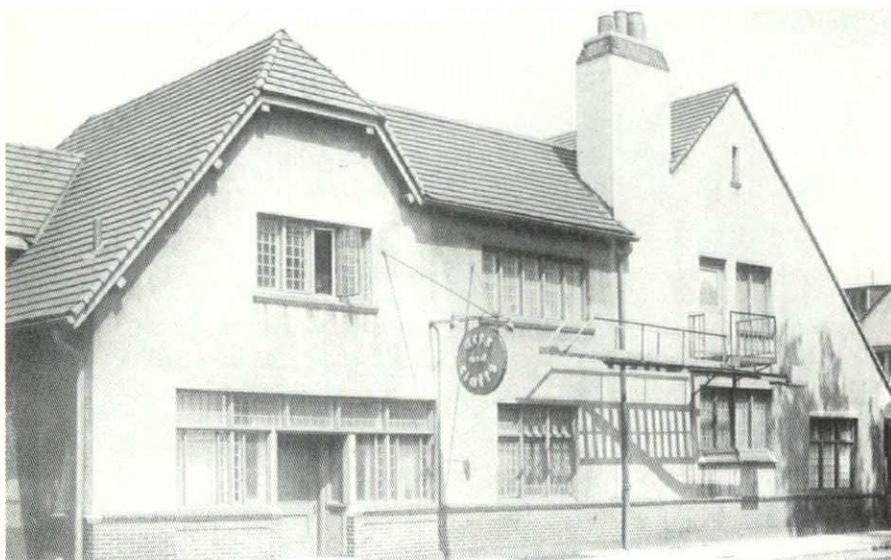
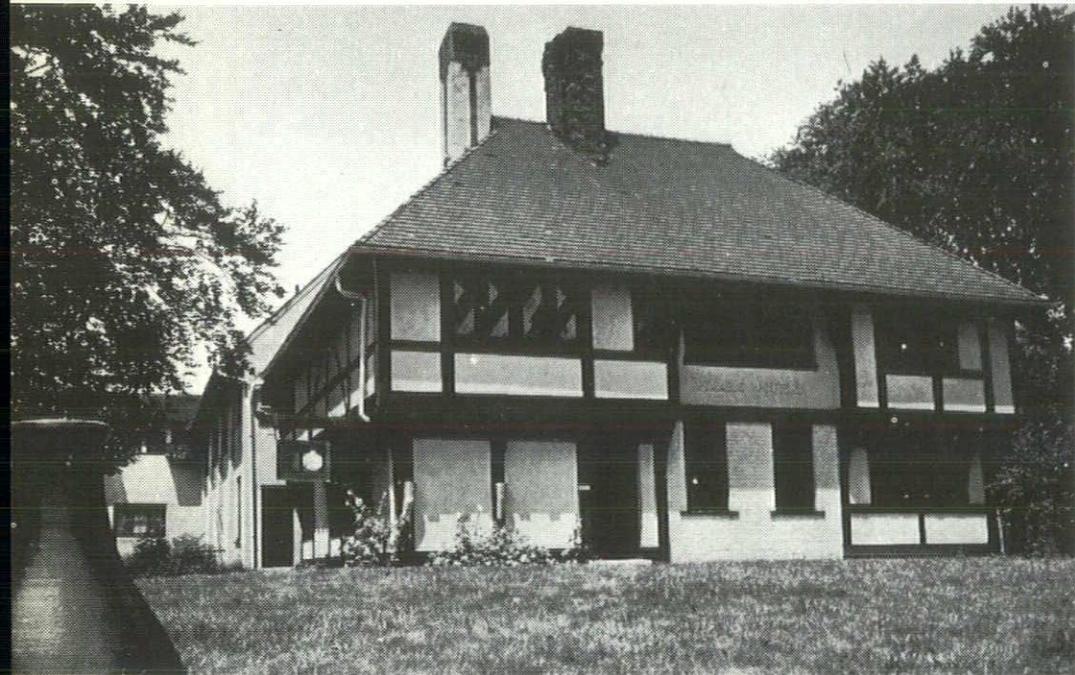


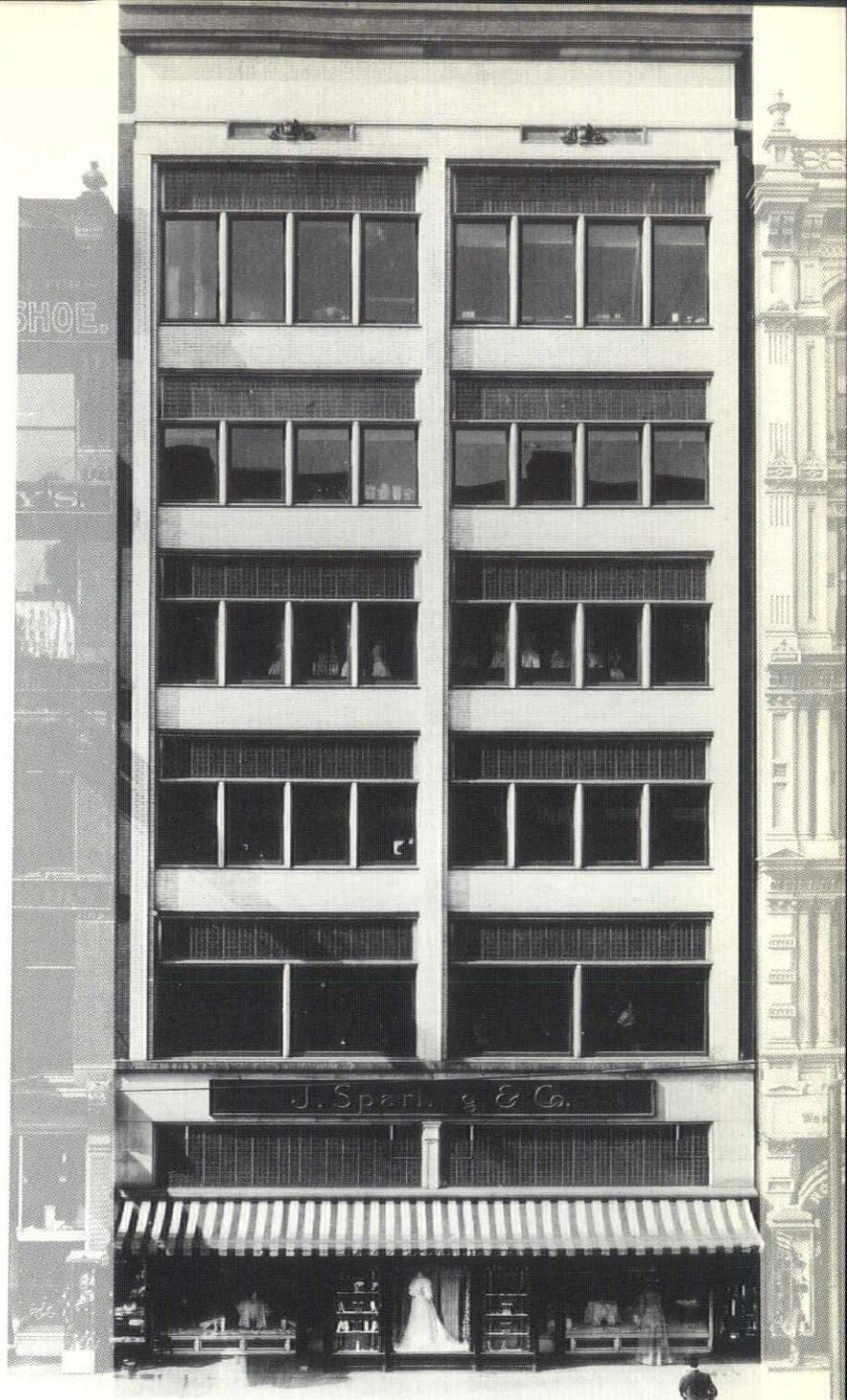
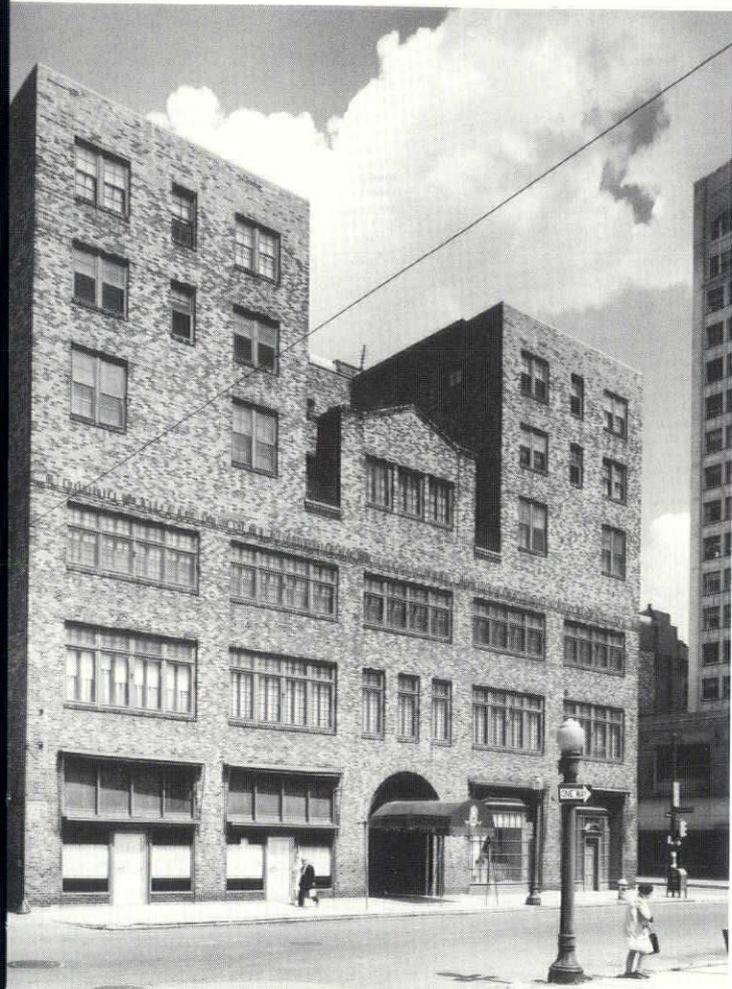
Pottery building in 1907 and the building designed for the Society of Arts & Crafts in association with Maxwell Grylls of Smith, Hinchman & Grylls in 1916.

Active in the Society of Arts & Crafts, and head of its executive committee, Stratton had designed and made furniture for the Arts & Crafts exhibitions at the Museum of Art in 1904 and 1905. Also active in the Committee were Mary Chase Perry, a native of Hancock, Michigan and Horace Caulkins, of Ann Arbor, who together founded Detroit's Pewabic Pottery. In 1907 Perry and Caulkins commissioned Stratton to design the new Pewabic Pottery works on East Jefferson, which over a long span of years, provided tiles for some of Detroit's outstanding buildings. A mutual interest in the Arts & Crafts led to the subsequent marriage of Mary Chase Perry and Stratton in 1918.

Hawkins Ferry describes the new building for the Society of Arts and Crafts as being most akin to the work done by Voysey and his contemporaries in England. The plasticity of the roof form, the free, informal grouping of windows and the overall subtlety of details together with the expression of the tactile sense of materials and emphasis on craftsmanship embodied the vitality and spirit of the Arts & Crafts movement in Detroit at the time.

Perhaps more notable, however, among Stratton's early works, particularly as it relates to the Chicago school and its impact on the architecture of today, was the J. Sparling Company store (1055 Woodward) built in 1906. Before its later remodelings, it remained one of the best commercial structures in the City and perhaps the only one in Detroit that might have compared favorably with the proud heritage of the Chicago school. Essentially a facade building, it compares in its clarity of structure with Sullivan's similar Gage Building in Chicago built only 7 years earlier. Virtually devoid of ornament, the Sparling Building relied for its visual impact entirely on the refinement of related details and subtle textural contrasts of materials. That this building owes more perhaps to the work of Sullivan and Holabird & Root than to the more fashionable late 19th century English romanticists may be





understood when viewed in the context of the eclecticism which tended to prevail in selecting the "appropriate expression" for a particular building type.

No other known examples of Stratton's commercial structures such as the Sparling Company Building exist. This is regrettable particularly since it was such a singular expression of the more vital native ideology of the Chicago School which similarly had its philosophical source in the arts and crafts movement, very likely thru the earlier personal contacts of H. H. Richardson with William Morris in 1882, and Richardson's subsequent influ-

ence on the work of Sullivan, Wright & the Prairie School.

The Detroit Women's City Club, built in 1924, and Stratton's own home in Grosse Pointe built in 1927, best typify the culmination of a philosophy consistent with the local version of the arts and crafts movement at the time. The six-story Women's City Club stands on the corner of Park and Elizabeth and is still very much a thriving institution. Compactly designed on a restricted site, this no-nonsense building draws a parallel in many ways, (though perhaps irrelevantly) to Venturi and Rauch's "Conventional" approach to the Guild House

(1963) in Philadelphia. The almost banal facade, enriched only by the robust textural quality of the brick, is yet very direct in the expression of the functional elements, with the social rooms and shops of the lower three stories clearly distinguishable from the residential nature of the upper 3 floors. The interior, while unostentatious, has a spare, simple elegance with great variation in scale. Many of the touches of Mary Chase Stratton, such as the blue Pewabic Tile fountain of the roof garden and the tile swimming pool, are still in evidence.

The Stratton residence on Three-Mile Drive in Grosse Pointe has

been preserved almost intact by the present owners, Mr. & Mrs. Ayers Morison. With the exception of a bedroom suite remodeled by Alexander Girard, virtually nothing has been changed since it was designed by William and Mary Chase Stratton. In the face of the increasingly fashionable antiquarianism of the now affluent late twenties, he stood by the basic tenets of the arts and crafts movement. While Ferry suggests certain Spanish and Mexican influences, especially in the use of tile work as a consequence of their travels, they appear to be more closely allied to native handicrafts than any post-renaissance mannerism.

Much of an earlier house was incorporated in this one. Quoting from Stratton's article in the June 1937 "Michigan Architect and Engineer", "When we decided to move from

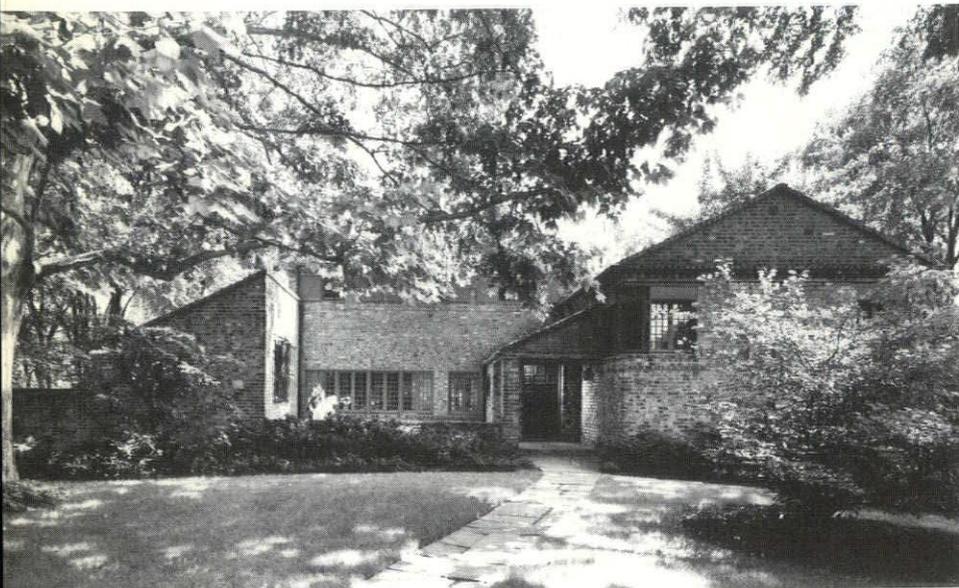
our East Grand Blvd. home in Detroit, it was quite evident that we would want to take with us many of the familiar features of the old house. So it was carefully taken down and the different parts were separated and moved to the new lot . . . the old plan still seemed serviceable, since both lots lay in the same relation to the sun and street, and besides, we were used to the arrangement".

The free, informal grouping of hybrid masses has much in common both with the English romanticists and the work of Eliel Saarinen at Cranbrook. Seemingly casual in its disposition of levels, with numerous bays and balconies, the house together with gardens designed by Raymond Wilcox, is a continuing succession of visual experiences. Windows in a profusion of shapes

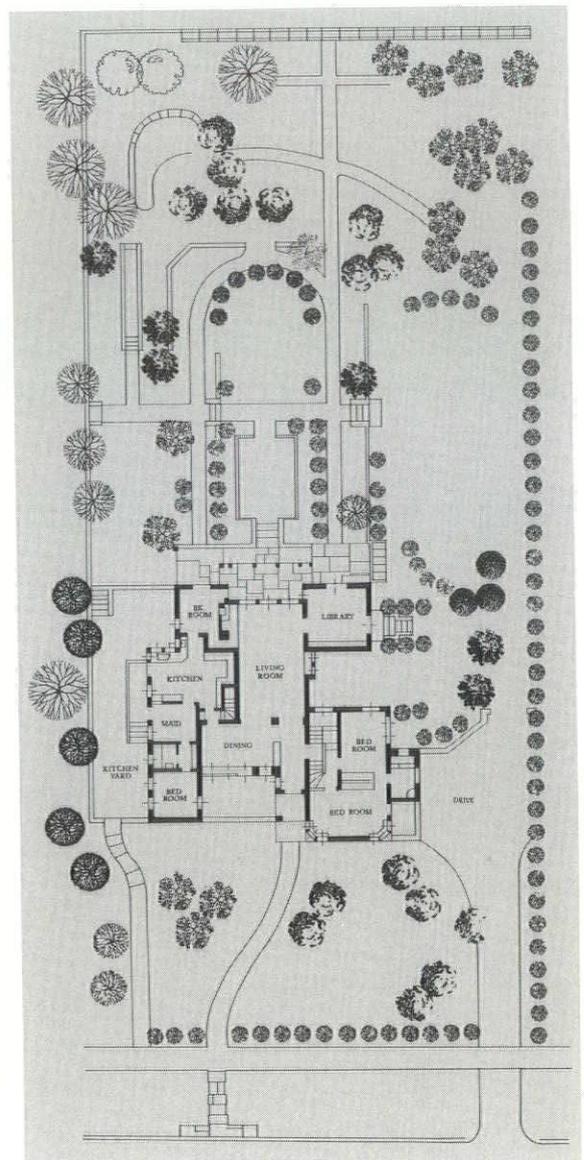
and sizes are everywhere to catch the sun and breeze or to view some hidden quiet corner of the garden, placed more with a concern for the quality of light than quantity. Beneath the seeming confusion is an underlying harmony and warmth, resulting from the liberal use of natural materials. Pewabic tiles are, of course, everywhere, lending touches of color and a rich tactile quality to a very human, unaffected interior of lightness and animation. A certain inventiveness is also apparent in the library ceiling where the concrete construction is exposed expressing the rather artfully contrived forms of the V-Shaped joists. Withal, the building is complex, perhaps even inconsistent, and therein lies its charm and its human quality. His own house probably marked the zenith of his career, and while he received some rather substantial

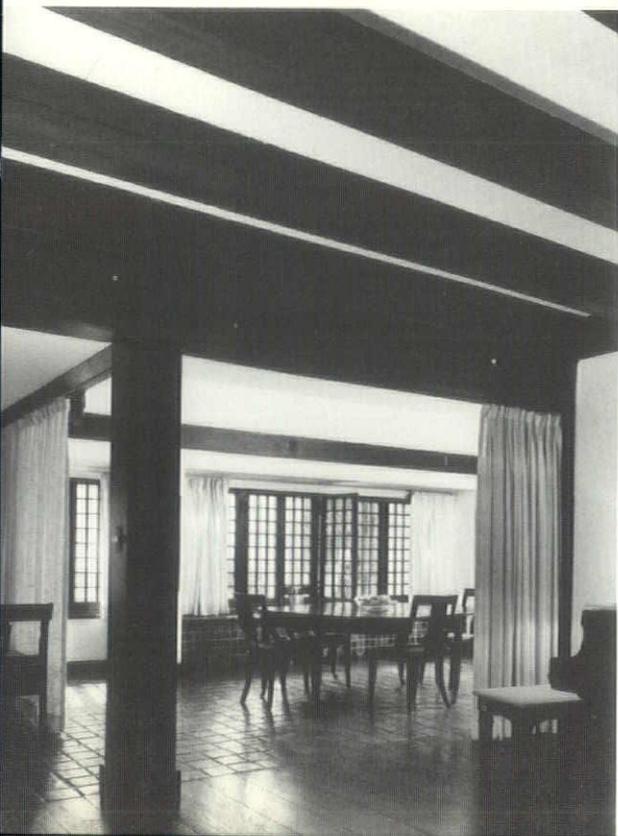
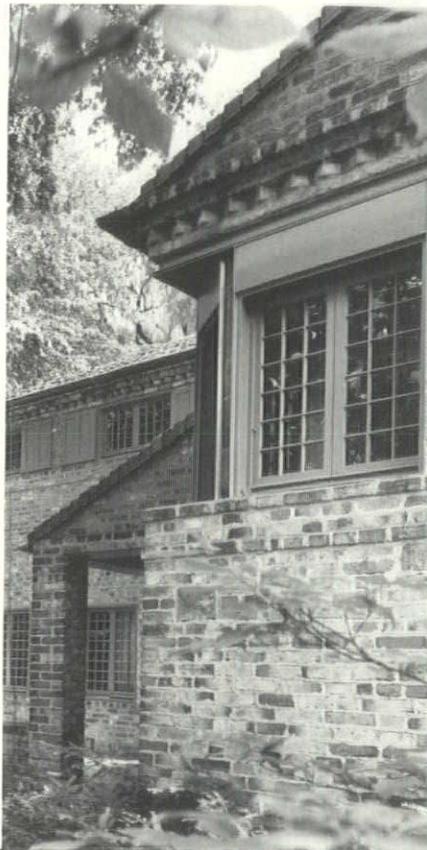
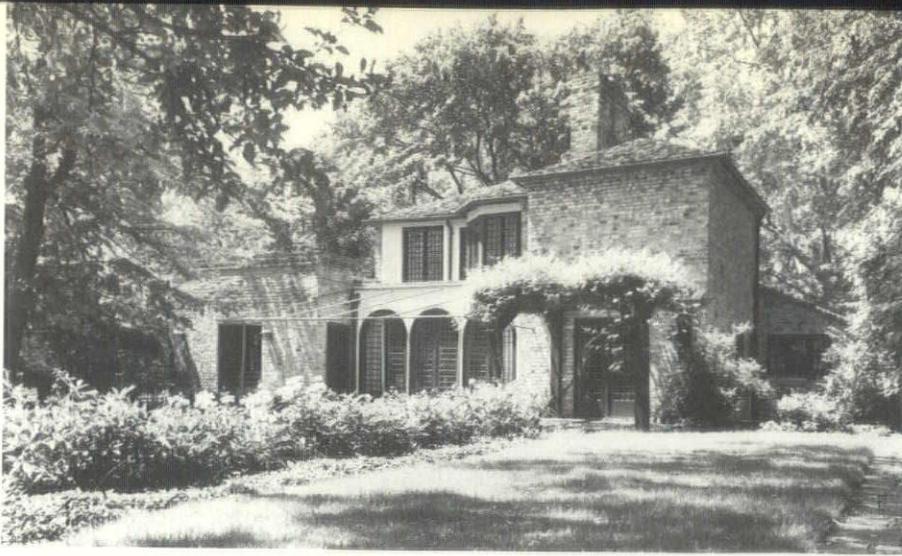


First Stratton House—Grand Blvd.



Stratton House—Grosse Pointe





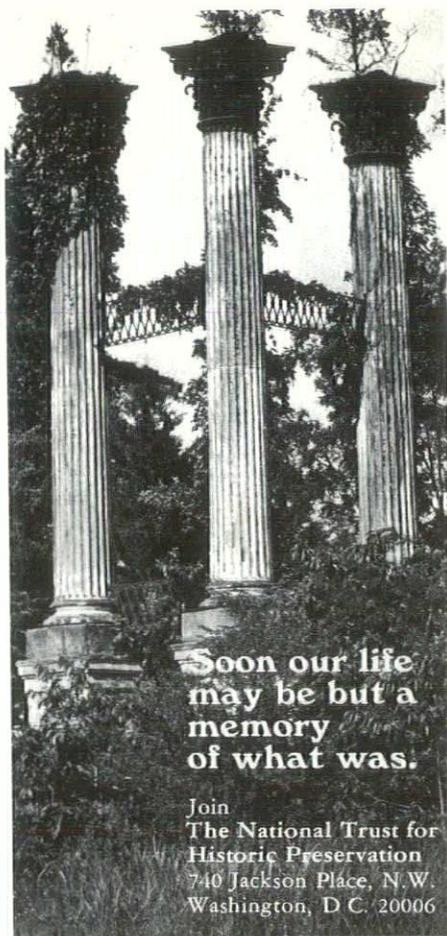
commissions in the '30's (most notable perhaps, the unfortunate naval armory on Jefferson Avenue) the later buildings succumbed to the eclectic pressures of the 30's, (the Colonial Edward Bennett House for example) yet even these have a gracious, informal quality.

William Buck Stratton died in 1938, at the time when Detroit was beginning to pull itself out of the depression. What further turns his architecture would have taken is unknown. What we do know, however, is that he was a very human, exceptionally sensitive architect.

What remained of the arts and crafts movement, at least as it related to architecture in Detroit, withered away in the 30's, and after World War II most architects had accepted the new International School movement and the machine age with all its implications. New materials, new processes, new forms, new problems required a new approach that was already well seasoned by such reformers as Mies and Gropius.

The arts and crafts movement begun by William Morris was seen as a medievalized socialism escaping into the happier but irrelevant world of handicraft. The architecture of the arts and crafts movement similarly was seen as being complex, romantic, often contradictory; the antithesis of modern architecture.

While the rationalism of Modern Architecture was born of a striving for simplicity and order, to accommodate and even celebrate the machine aesthetic, what we view of life today is anything but simple and orderly. The modern movement, in becoming mature and recognizing its place in society, may learn to view life as complex and ironic rather than predictably simple and rational. In the current efforts of industry toward "job enrichment" we might suspect that the maledictions of William Morris were not entirely without foundation. A renaissance of the handicraft movement is unlikely, yet we know that from a humanistic point of view, much of our life as it is expressed in art and architecture is found wanting. The arts and crafts movement once had something to offer toward the enrichment of Everyman's life. The recognition of the efforts of such men as Stratton may add another dimension to architecture and to our lives.



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may be but a  
memory  
of what was.

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# michigan ZOO

In its desire to provide broad and varied cultural/recreational experiences within the recently assembled 4,700 acre Genesee Recreation Area, the Genesee Parks and Recreation Commission designated a site within it to be developed as a zoo. Accordingly, the Recreation Area Master Plan of 1968 identifies the site for this purpose. Following a series of interviews the Commission retained the firm of Johnson, Johnson & Roy of Ann Arbor in May 1968 to prepare a General Development Plan for the zoo and initial phase construction documents.

Because the site for the zoo was under condemnation at the time of the award of contract, access to the site was restricted causing the early phases of planning to be interrupted and delayed. Advantage was taken of this period to gather together available information regarding the presentation of animals in their natural habitat. In addition, a number of outstanding zoos were visited in an effort to bring together a collection of information that would be helpful to this project. Because documented display design criteria was discovered to be extremely lacking, research was undertaken which lead to what the planner believes to be one of the most comprehensive graphic presentations of criteria for the presentation of native animals. Although initially conceived as a display of animals and birds native to the State of Michigan, a recommendation early in the planning lead to an enlargement of the concept to include the presentation of all animals and birds native to the American Continent. Because it is believed to be the first zoo to be explicitly devoted to the representation of this geographic area, the Genesee North American County Zoo will be unique.

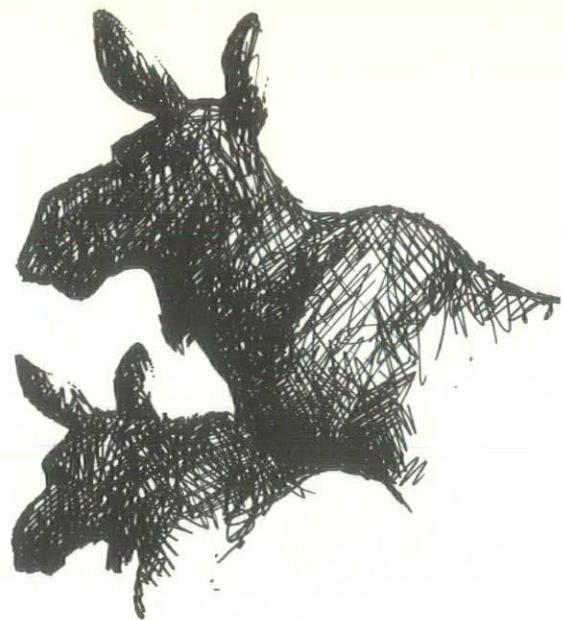
Following acquisition of the site, the planning process continued in earnest, during its various phases of development, the planning effort was reviewed with an Advisory Committee composed of members of the Genesee County Zoological Society, together with staff representatives of the Genesee Parks and Recreation Commission. In addition, Johnson, Johnson & Roy availed themselves of the technical expertise of George Speidel, Director of the Milwaukee County Zoological Park.

Following the acceptance of the General Development Plan by the Advisory Committee and Commission, and in recognition of the need to attract widespread public support to obtain funding for development, Johnson, Johnson & Roy elected to present the documentation of the General Development Plan in the format of a series of posters. Each poster represents a major theme category of display providing flexibility in fund raising efforts limited to one or several displays or including the entire group. Mrs. Sandra Hansen of JJR prepared drawings of the animals with a two-color rendering of the dominant animal in each display appearing on the front of the poster. It is intended that these will become integral parts of the signing and identity program of the zoo once it is developed. On the back side of the posters additional drawings appear of all the animals within each display together with text describing the concept and details of animal presentation techniques.

Initial development money for the zoo was included in a millage election to the voters of Genesee County in Fall of 1972. Unfortunately, it was included as a small part of a much larger package involving the acquisition of new park sites. The size of the total package together with voter attitudes at the time caused the package to be defeated and therefore the initial construction of the zoo to be delayed. It is anticipated that the millage for the zoo and other facilities will appear again on a later ballot. In the interim, fund raising efforts are limited to the sale of posters.



north american zoo  
genesee county  
parks and recreation commission



michigan zoo  
**general development plan**

In their desire to provide broadly varied cultural/recreational experiences within the recently assembled 4,700 acre Genesee Recreation Area, the Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission designated a site within it to be developed as a zoo. Accordingly, the recreation area master plan of 1968 identified a site for this purpose. Initially conceived as a zoo to display animals and birds native to the state of Michigan, a recommendation early in the planning of the zoo led to an enlargement of the concept to include the presentation of all animals and birds native to the North American continent. Believed to be the first zoo explicitly devoted to representation of this geographic area, the Genesee County North American Zoo will be unique in the world. It will effectively complement the Detroit Zoological Park only fifty miles away and thus contribute a significant addition to the cultural resources of Michigan.

The opportunities for exciting displays are as numerous as the animal species native to our continent. A review of a partial list of animals and birds associated with the various environmental regions within North America suggests the potential for variety and attractiveness in their display presentation:

#### **michigan-northeast**

moose	bobcat	shrews
gray wolf	gray fox	weasels
whitetail deer	red fox	voles
black bear	cottontail rabbit	bats
otter	varying hare	mice
mink	red squirrel	moles
muskrat	gray squirrel	owls
opossum	fox squirrel	falcons
striped skunk	fisher	hawks
canada porcupine	pine marten	migratory aquatic birds
woodchuck	chipmunk	waterfowl
badger	raccoon	*peregrine falcon

#### **rocky mountains-great plains**

bison	mountain goat	yellow bellied marmot
pronghorn antelope	bighorn sheep	pika
badger	black bear	golden mantled ground squirrel
coyote	cinnamon bear	yellow haired porcupine
jackrabbit	*grizzly bear	eagles, bald and golden
*blackfooted ferret	beaver	bats
prairie dog	wapiti	shrews
cougar		

### arctic north

glacier bear  
alaskan brown bear  
polar bear  
alaskan wolf  
caribou  
alaska fur seal

walrus  
lynx  
wolverine  
arctic fox  
snowy owl

\*sea otter  
lemming  
arctic hare  
tundra hare  
hoary marmot

### gulf coast-southeast

\*alligator  
crocodile  
florida panther  
\*manatee  
bobcat  
\*key deer  
raccoon  
opossum

cotton rat  
wood rat  
striped skunk  
red fox  
gray fox  
dolphins  
\*southern bald eagle

pelicans  
egrets  
herons  
ibis  
spoonbill  
flamingo  
bats  
\*whooping crane

### desert southwest

jaguar  
blacktailed deer  
desert mule deer  
desert bighorn sheep  
ocelot  
jaguarundi  
coatimundi  
kit fox  
coyote  
armadillo

cacomistle  
spotted skunk  
hooded skunk  
hog nosed skunk  
collared peccary  
desert tortoise  
desert cottontail  
jackrabbit  
desert shrew  
bats

gray squirrel  
fox squirrel  
chipmunk  
kangaroo rat  
scorpions  
tarantula  
roadrunner  
vultures  
hawks - owls  
\*california condor

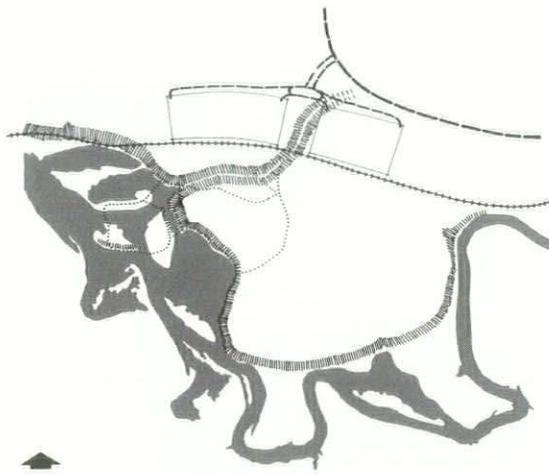
\*Because the existence of some of the above species, such as grizzly bear, key deer, blackfooted ferret, manatee, sea otter, alligator, southern bald eagle, California condor, whooping crane and peregrine falcon, has been threatened by man's increasing dominance over the natural environment, their presentation may need to be limited to graphic portrayal or sculptural form. In an effort to prevent the extinction of these and other forms of native wildlife, the North American Zoo is dedicated to the preservation of threatened species.



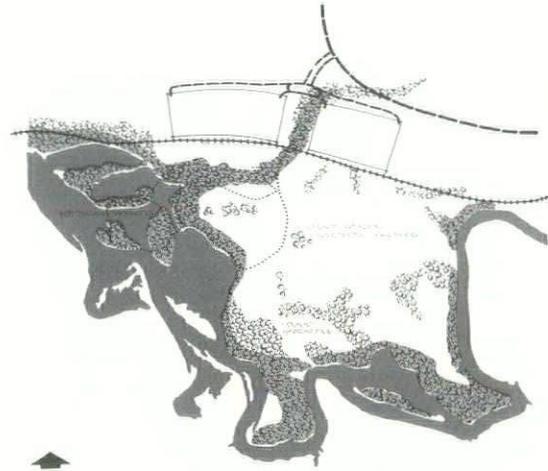
## the site

The site designated for the North American Zoo within the Genesee Recreation Area is a significant one located at the upper end of C. S. Mott Lake, formed in 1972 by damming the Flint River. A plateau surrounded by water on three sides, the site is located at the transition point between the river and lake marked by a series of islands. Its wooded edges offer unique potential for the display of water-oriented species in their natural habitats; the plateau itself is pleasantly broken down in spatial scale by the pattern of vegetation upon it and is appropriate to the presentation of upland species.

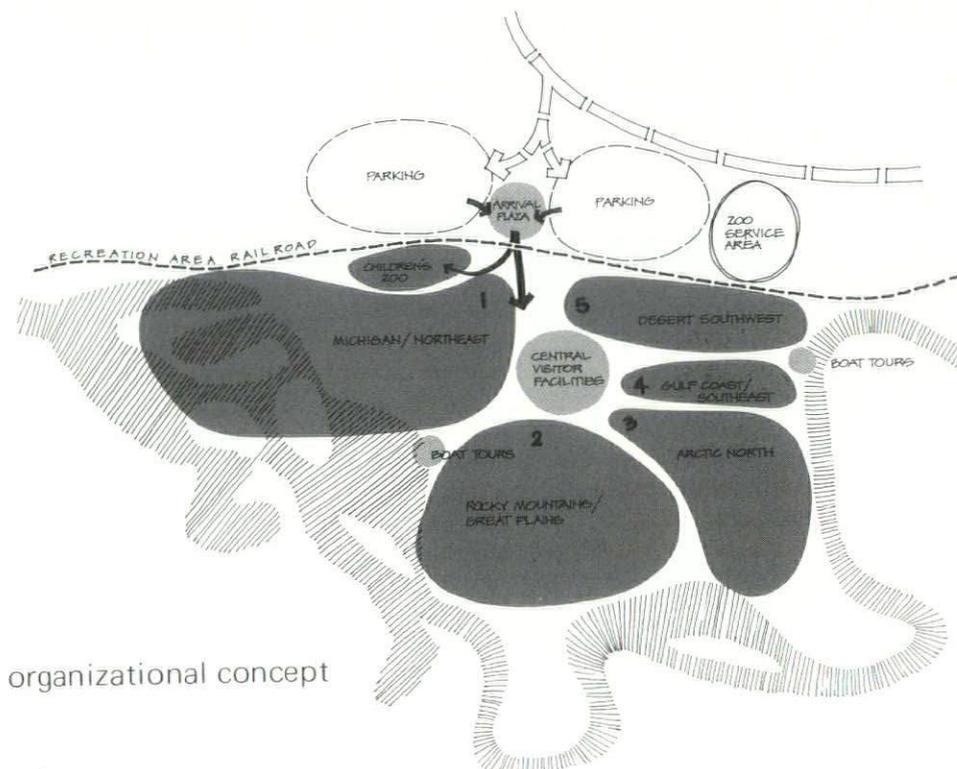
The one hundred and twenty-five acre site enjoys excellent access within the framework of the recreation area master plan. Vehicular access is gained from the park road immediately adjacent to the site and the park excursion railroad traverses it. Even more importantly, the winter sports area to the north, nature center to the south, music and fine arts to the west and day use area to the east provide the site with compatible neighbors.



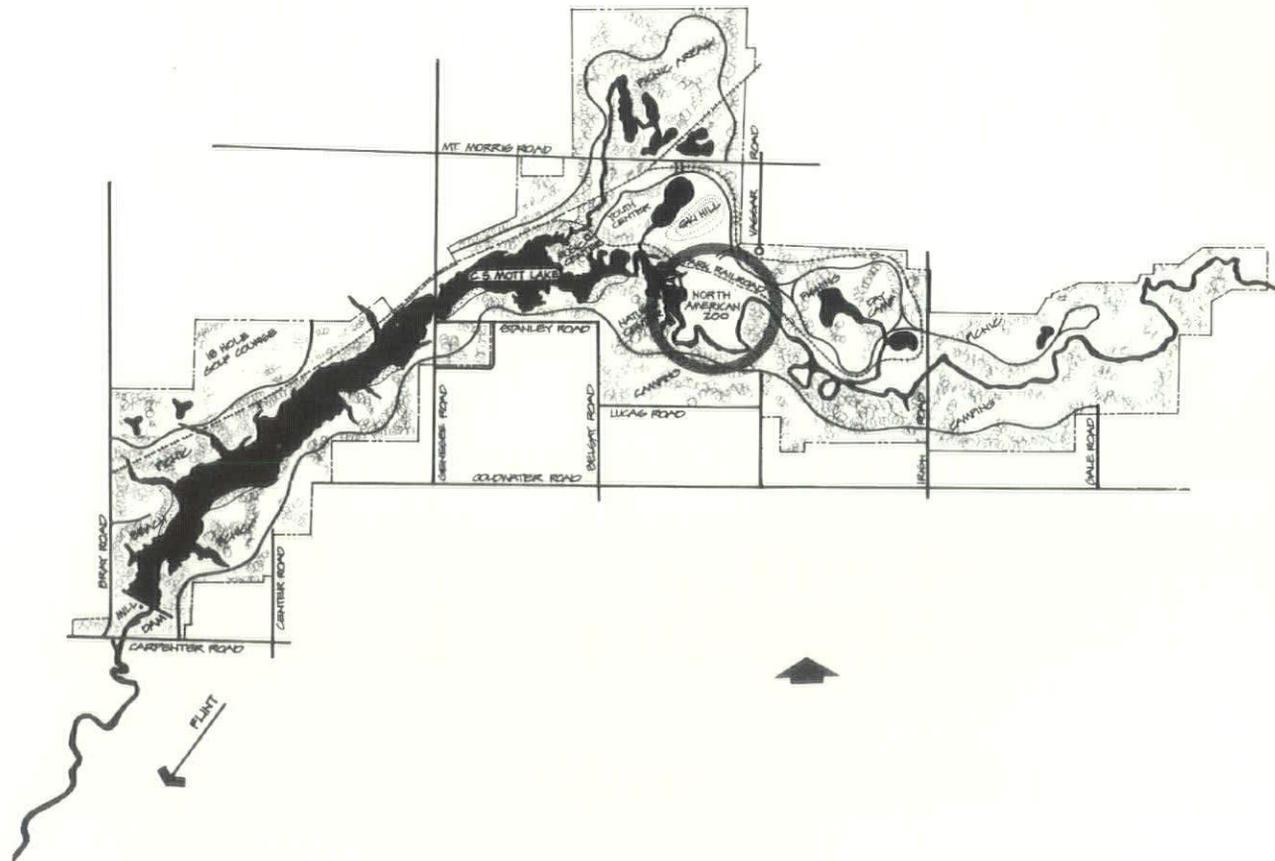
site characteristic/slopes



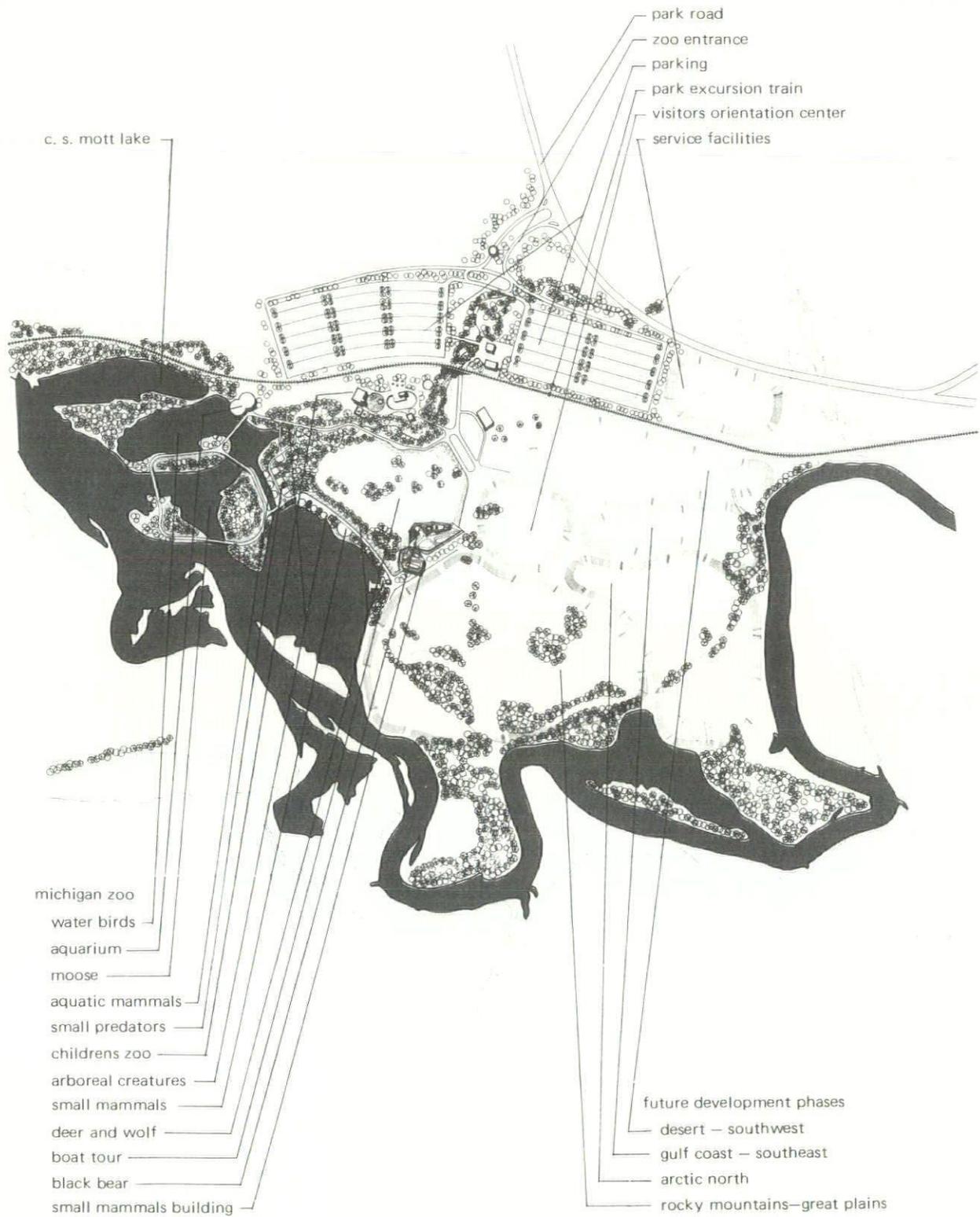
site characteristic/vegetation



organizational concept



north american zoo location/genesee county recreation area



## michigan zoo

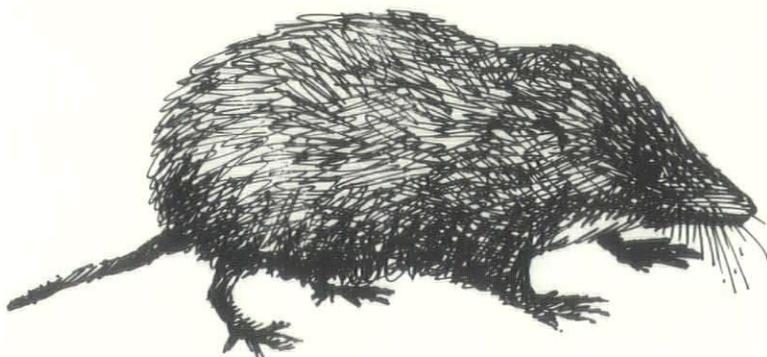
The initial phase of the development of the North American Zoo will be the presentation of those species native to the state of Michigan and the northeastern region of the United States extending into Canada. The animal and bird life of this environmental zone in itself offers exciting display opportunities:

moose	arboreal creatures
black bear	pine marten
deer and wolf	hawks
small predators	owls
bobcat	squirrels
red fox	water birds
gray fox	swans
fisher	ducks
aquatic mammals	geese
otter	loons
mink	herons
muskrat	egrets
small mammals	nocturnal mammals
raccoon	bats
skunk	flying squirrels
opossum	jumping mice
badger	weasels
porcupine	shrews
woodchuck	voles
ground squirrel	mice
cottontail rabbit	fish
varying hares	



Facilities housing the small mammals and fish will need to be structures with controlled environments. These will be designed to accommodate species beyond the northeast region and include those native to the entire North American continent. Similarly, exclusions from the above list, notably birds and reptiles, will be displayed in indoor facilities to be provided in later construction phases of the zoo. An aviary is planned for the Gulf Coast-Southeast region and a reptile house will be included in the Desert Southwest region.

In addition to the animal, bird and fish displays, the Michigan Zoo will include a Children's Zoo. Designed within an attractive Michigan farm theme, it will include educational facilities to provide opportunities for children to observe animal life, become familiar with domestic and farm animals and learn the proper care of pets.



## the plan

The plan proposed for the development of the North American Zoo takes advantage of the site features to the fullest degree. A short vehicular penetration into the site from the park road terminates in parking lots on either side of a natural ravine. Visitors enter into the zoo along walkways parallel to this ravine passing beneath a railroad bridge at which point they are joined by visitors arriving at the zoo by way of the park excursion train. An orientation center, train station, concessions and ticket facilities are clustered near the entrance. Major walkways radiate out from the central area into the various regional display zones, always returning to the central facility area. In this manner, visitors are provided the option of a relatively short tour to one region of the zoo or a more lengthy tour including several or all of the various regional displays. Because the walkways are continually returned to the central area, the concentration of concessions and other general facilities within this zone is made feasible. Within each regional zone those species having natural upland habitats are displayed on the plateau with those associated with water environments exhibited along the river or lake edge. Thus to the fullest degree possible each species is to be displayed in an environment closely approximating its natural habitat and contributing to its health and well-being. As in nature, views of the animals will be constantly changing and occasionally fleeting, making each visit to the zoo a new experience. This concept of presenting the animal in his environment will add substantially to the beauty of the park and avoid similarity to the "naked cage" atmosphere of earlier menageries.

In addition to accommodating the general site characteristics, the plan proposes to maximize the potential of features unique to the site. The three islands formed by the raised water elevation of the lake are connected together and to the mainland by bridges providing pedestrian access and animal control. One of the larger and more interesting animals of the northeast region, the moose, is displayed within this delineated space with both land and water environments. Water birds are presented in a similar environment nearby. Dramatic views of the long dimension of C. S. Mott Lake from the aquarium suggest the possible inclusion of a dining facility in this structure. The site affords the unique opportunity to provide a boat tour of the water-oriented animal displays in addition to pedestrian and mini-bus circulation systems. This feature will enhance the attractiveness of the zoo to visitors as well as permit an added dimension of display capability.

Concealed from view within the vegetation on the wooded slopes along the water's edge, wire fences provide security for the zoo premises. Flexibility of visitor control is provided within the plan at the entrance drive or the pedestrian arrival plaza. Service facilities are designated for a site east of the parking areas.





### Design Manual Published by PCI

The Architectural Precast Concrete Division of the Prestressed Concrete Institute has announced the publication of a new design manual titled *Architectural Precast Concrete*.

Illustrated with 175 photographs, 115 line drawings, the book contains definite guidelines, as well as

some important do's and don'ts, for achieving optimum economy in architectural precast concrete design.

The 173-page manual is sequentially arranged to follow the logical progression of design development. It takes the reader from concept stages through detailing procedures to actual specifying.

Partial contents include: Design concepts. Total wall analysis. Panel usage. Cost factors. Quality and economics of materials. Weathering effects. Shape, form, and size considerations. Performance specifications. Comprehensive coverage of finishes, detailing, connections,

tolerances, and joints. Manufacture, handling, transportation, and erection.

At \$15.00 per copy, the Manual is available from the Prestressed Concrete Institute, 20 North Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60606.

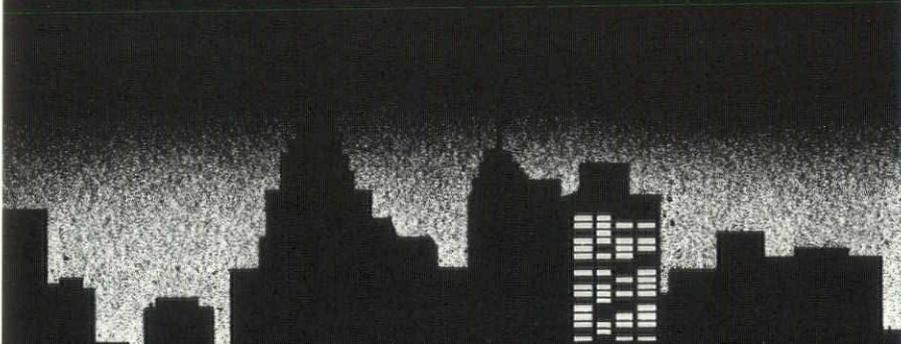
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Telephone, Guest speaker.

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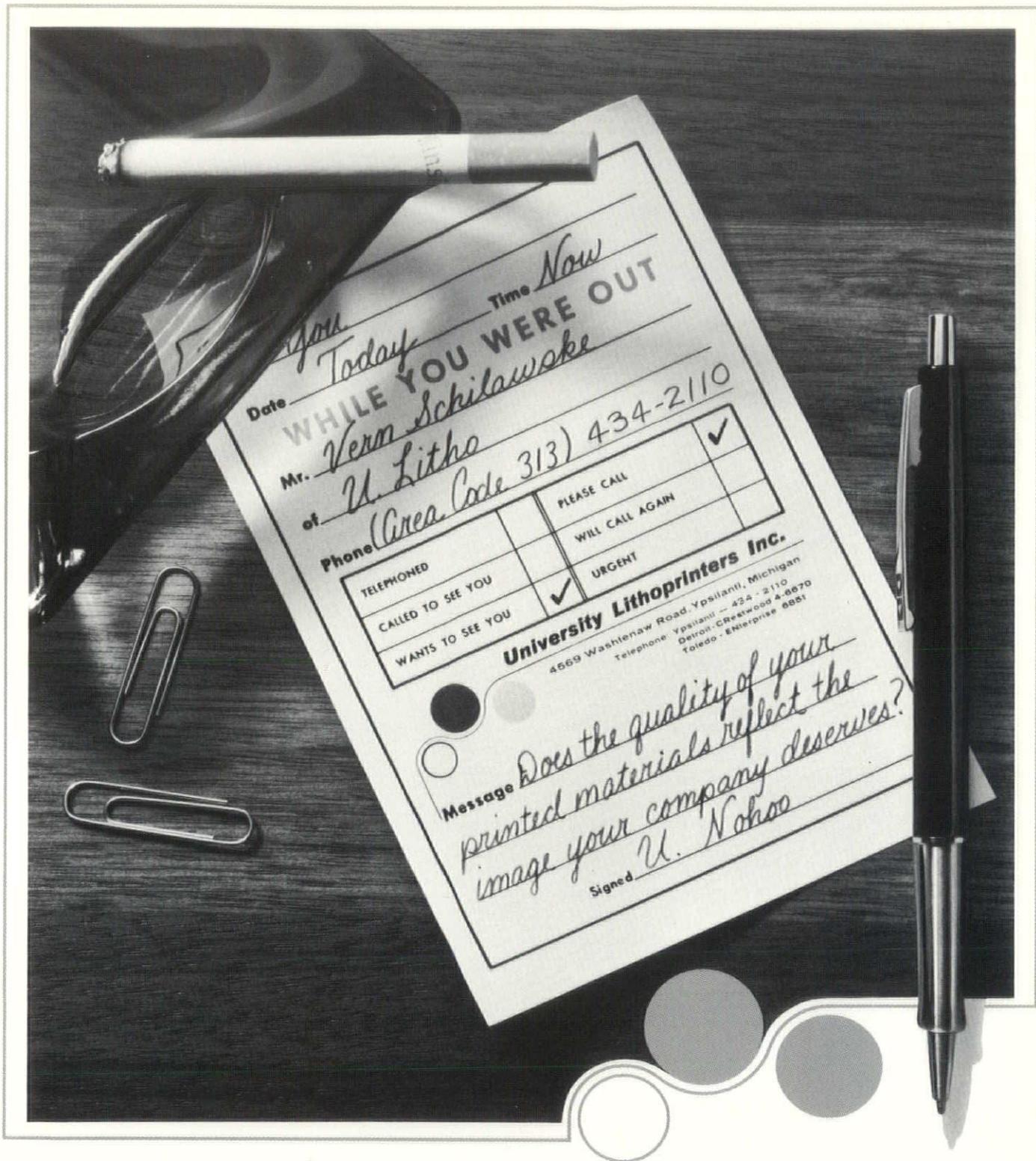


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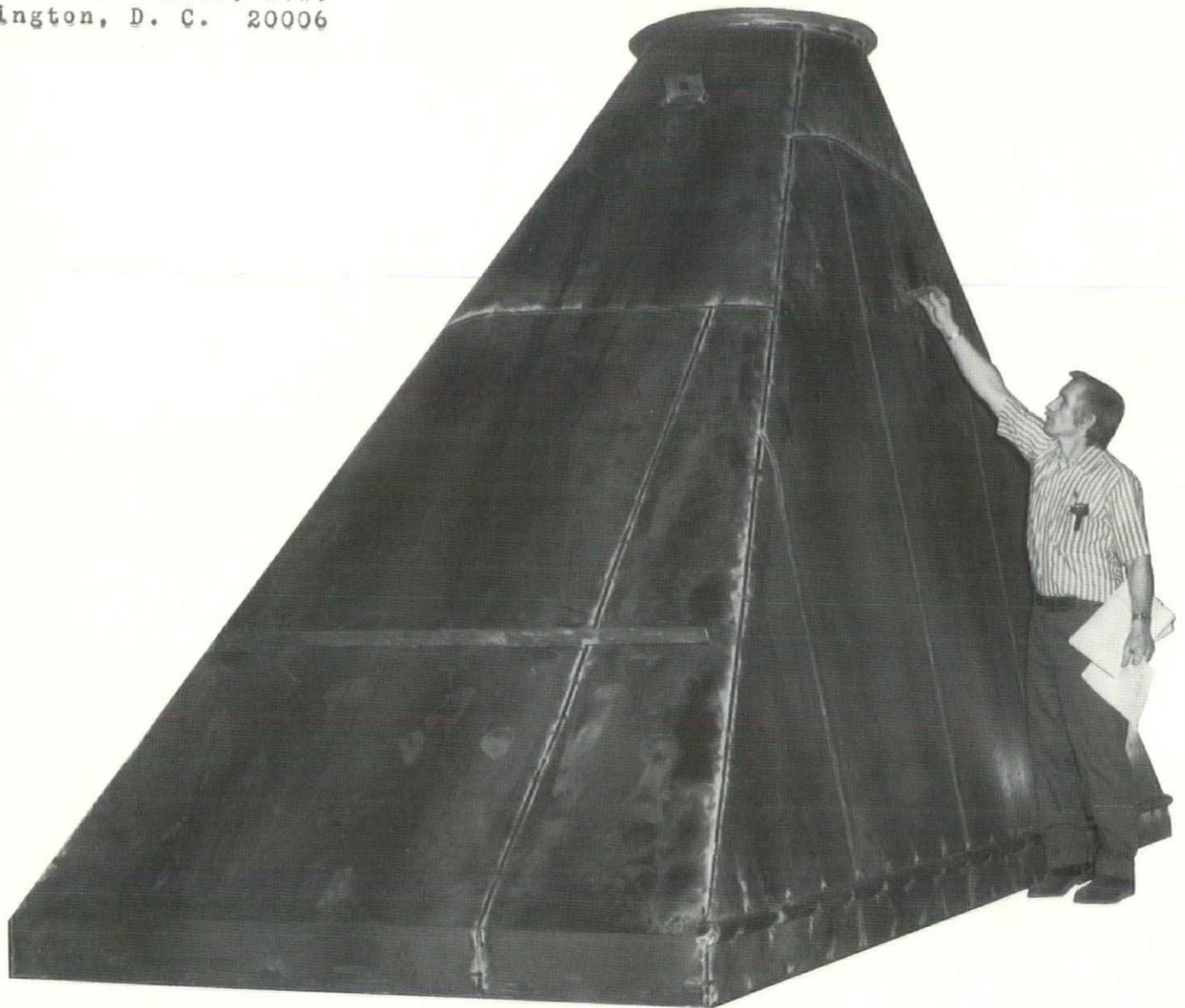
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