

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER, 1989

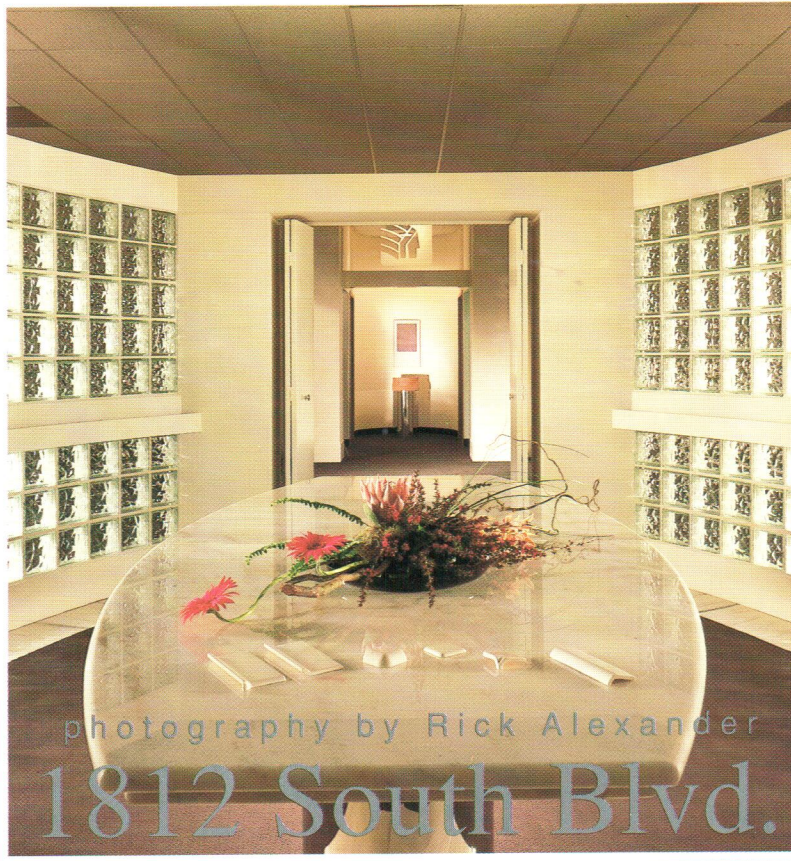
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1989
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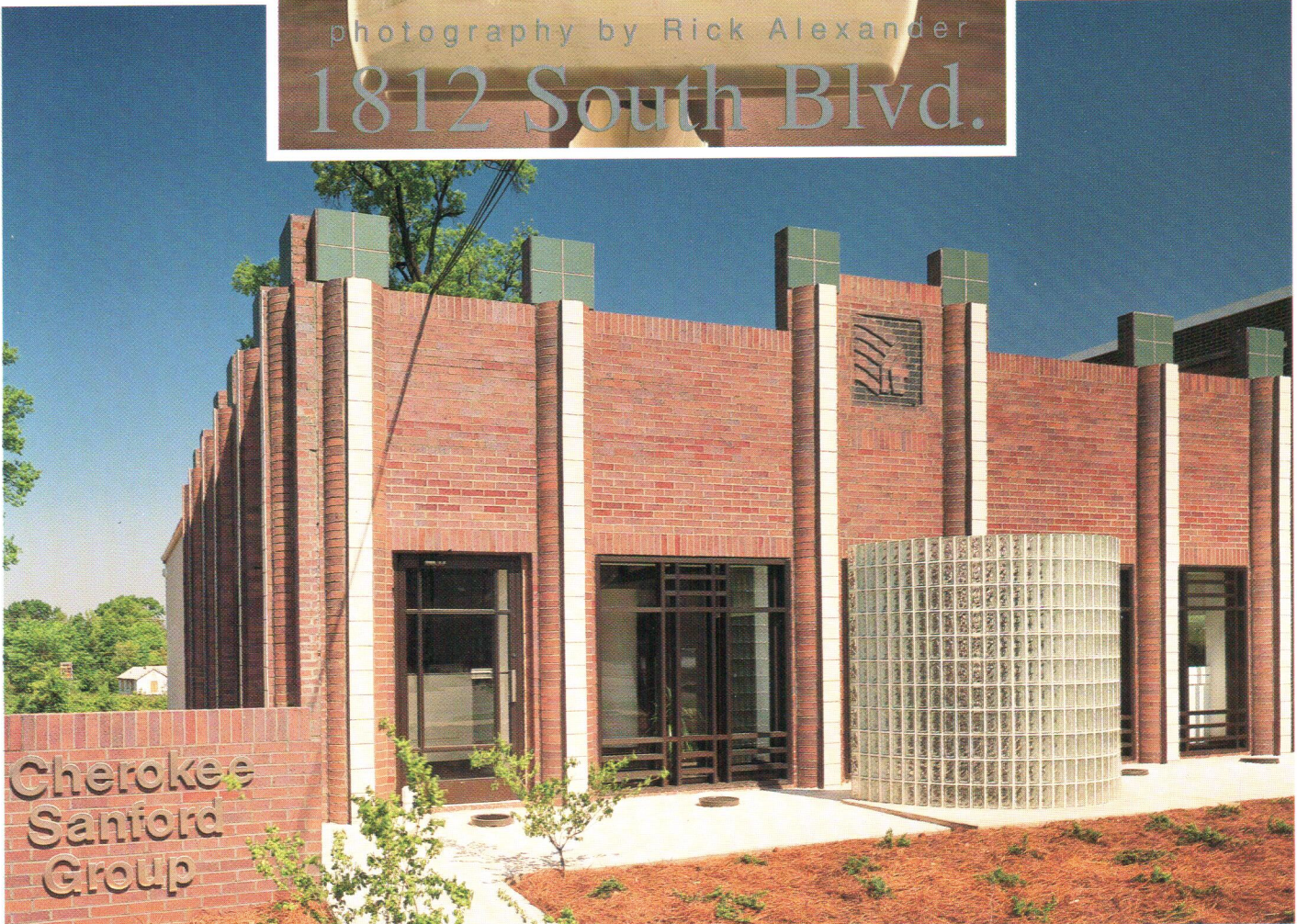
**Text by: Evelyn
Murray Langley**

Left: Interior view of glass block conference room wall. Below: Day shot of exterior at front entrance featuring round glass-block wall and unique window treatment.

Opposite Page: A thumbnail view of conference room featuring table of Georgia White marble. (Inset) A nondescript auto parts retail store before becoming the Cherokee Sanford Group Product Showroom

photography by Rick Alexander

1812 South Blvd.



Architect Wayne Camas has an opinion, a very definite opinion on architecture.

He believes it must have a profound, measurable effect on people's lives, and insists on preserving the historical values of architecture and people in his work. He insists on taking what is characteristically vibrant about the structure and its surroundings and building upon those strengths.

These qualities have earned Camas this year's Reconstruction Project of the Year Award for the brick and tile Cherokee Sanford Group Product Showroom.

The showroom is located in the historic Dilworth community of Charlotte, North Carolina and has also won a 1988 Beautification Award from the city of Charlotte, as well as a regional award by the Institute of Business Designers, Carolinas Chapter. These awards applaud the architects efforts to retain the true character of the original structure and revive an area which had previously suffered from outmigration and disinvestment.

The Cherokee Sanford Group Product Showroom

At 1812 South Boulevard, adjacent to the intersection of Dilworth's central East Boulevard, is the Cherokee Sanford Group Product Showroom for brick and tile, formerly a nondescript auto parts retail store. The exterior design was influenced by the salient design features and relationships of other buildings within the area.

The two-story masonry building is situated in a location presently undergoing redevelopment. Its presence, once an unattractive but solid building, now assumes a quiet, alluring position between a church and a warehouse renovation project. The new Cherokee Sanford exterior, enhanced by examples of the Cherokee Sanford Group's own products, uses tile as an ornamental feature and custom radial brick as a pilaster. Its focal point is a spectacularly illuminated curved glass block wall in front of the building that

creates an interesting dimension to the otherwise linear facade.

The public enter on the same level as the parts store at street level, which serves primarily as the showroom. Offices are located at the rear of the building. The existing basement, or second level, provides almost 2,000 square feet of storage space and its entry is oriented to the rear shielded from public view and adjacent to the company's brickyard.



Even Within the Confines of this Existing Rectangular Building, Camas has Created an Alluring Movement with the Use of Encircling Displays and Curving Walls.

The Cherokee Sanford showroom utilizes an art gallery aesthetic approach to product display, encircling a curved glass block enclosed conference room that is essentially free-standing within the ten foot high space which draws one's attention to the glass-etched Cherokee Indian-head logo at the furthestmost end of the room.

The product display system is actually a series of loop carpeted, sloped surfaces that surround the showroom walls, which

provides salespeople with presentation space and storage in cabinets below. The display system was built out of birch, then painted optical white to draw attention solely to the products on display. A unique feature of the design is that the individual products are backed with velcro allowing each unit to be easily attached or removed on the sloped, loop-carpeted surfaces.

Further enhancing the gallery aesthetic is nonobtrusive white track lighting selected for its inherent flexibility for changing display emphasis and color balance. Above the display area surrounding the showroom is space for framed photographs of new building applications. This wall is washed from below by a trough light.

The light-enhancing focal point of the showroom — the glass block enclosed conference room — also has a white marble tile border within the floor around the perimeter. A custom-designed oval conference table that follows the lines of the curved glass wall was designed and fabricated of the same White Georgia Marble as the tile. Resting on chrome bases, this white marble table is striking against the dark-grey pin-dot carpet.

Even within the confines of this existing rectangular building, Camas has created an alluring movement with the use of encircling displays and curving walls. The overall impact is quite dramatic and a reinforcement of the philosophy that significant architecture, creates an environment that not only creates a procession, but also meets people's needs. One of the most interesting evaluations of the new showroom during its black tie opening came from another Charlotte architect, who said, "This is the most beautiful night club I've ever been in."

After working hours, outdoor recessed floodlights are in position to illuminate the facade. Floodlights on the inside curve of the freestanding exterior glass block wall accent its form and highlight an overhead brick sculpture of the company's logo.

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The Architect Behind the Design

The Camas philosophy emphasizes the importance of listening and responding to the needs of others and, therefore, creating environments that are livable, flexible, working extensions of those needs. Without listening, he believes designs become merely egotistical monuments to the architect.

That Camas Associates has helped renovate numerous commercial projects within Charlotte's historic Dilworth community is not surprising. These philosophies are as underlying as the old trolley-car rails that once defined its corridors. Camas himself has been a longtime resident of Dilworth, purchasing ten years ago a traditional "southern bungalow" which overlooks a tree-canopied park. He insists that one must continually be reminded of his beginnings in order to appreciate the present, and also better plan for the future.

Some would consider this 38-year-old architect outspoken. Rarely missing an opportunity to evaluate architectural

design, it's not uncommon to receive a multi-page letter from Wayne on unresolved topics of discussion. His associates will also confirm that he stands rock solid on his convictions.

History To Draw On

Charlotte's Dilworth neighborhood began in the late 1890's as an upper-middle-class intown community. This residential subdivision was divided into three distinct districts; a railway corridor, a "park and garden" subdivision, and a grid-style residential subdivision. All three areas today have provided unique opportunities for architectural reconstruction.

The commercial railway corridor, where the Cherokee Sanford Group Product Showroom is located contains a mixed-use area of restaurants, retail shops, churches, convenience stores, and a movie theater, among others. Whereas the two residential sections have consistently thrived over the years, the railway corridor, particularly after World War II, suffered from out-migration and

disinvestment. Although it is now protected by the Charlotte Historic District Commission, its architectural design has been the least restricted until recent years. Efforts to retain the true character of the original structures and the area are primarily the result of concerned architects and developers, working with the commission to establish directions.

Project Epitomy of Reconstruction Awards Program

In an age of concern over the cost to our ecology for developing new raw materials, and its overall effect on our environment, Camas' design signifies the strength of reconstruction, while at the same time saluting our responsibility to preserve.

Camas has shown us that reconstruction can not only be practical but it *can* be significantly well designed and very beautifully detailed. Δ

Below: Night shot of exterior at the front entrance to the Cherokee-Sanford Group Product Showroom

