

# One M&T Plaza: A corporate architectural masterpiece and icon of Buffalo's urban renewal

On August 29, 2013 M&T Bank will enjoy 157 years of its headquarters being continuously located in downtown Buffalo, New York. One M&T Plaza, contemporarily classic, gleaming white, and stylishly slender, is the most beautiful and successful corporate skyscraper built in Buffalo during the twentieth century. Its impact on downtown Buffalo is as significant today as it was when the building was completed nearly 50 years ago.

## Before M&T Plaza: Manufacturers and Traders Trust Company's Previous Headquarters

M&T's home, One M&T Plaza, is not the first architecturally significant headquarters occupied by the bank. For the first 44 years of its existence, M&T leased space at various locations near the intersection of Main and Swan Streets: 2 East Swan Street (1856-1857); 275 Main Street (1857-1861); 22 West Seneca Street (1861-1880); and the southwest corner of Main and West Seneca Streets (1880-1900).

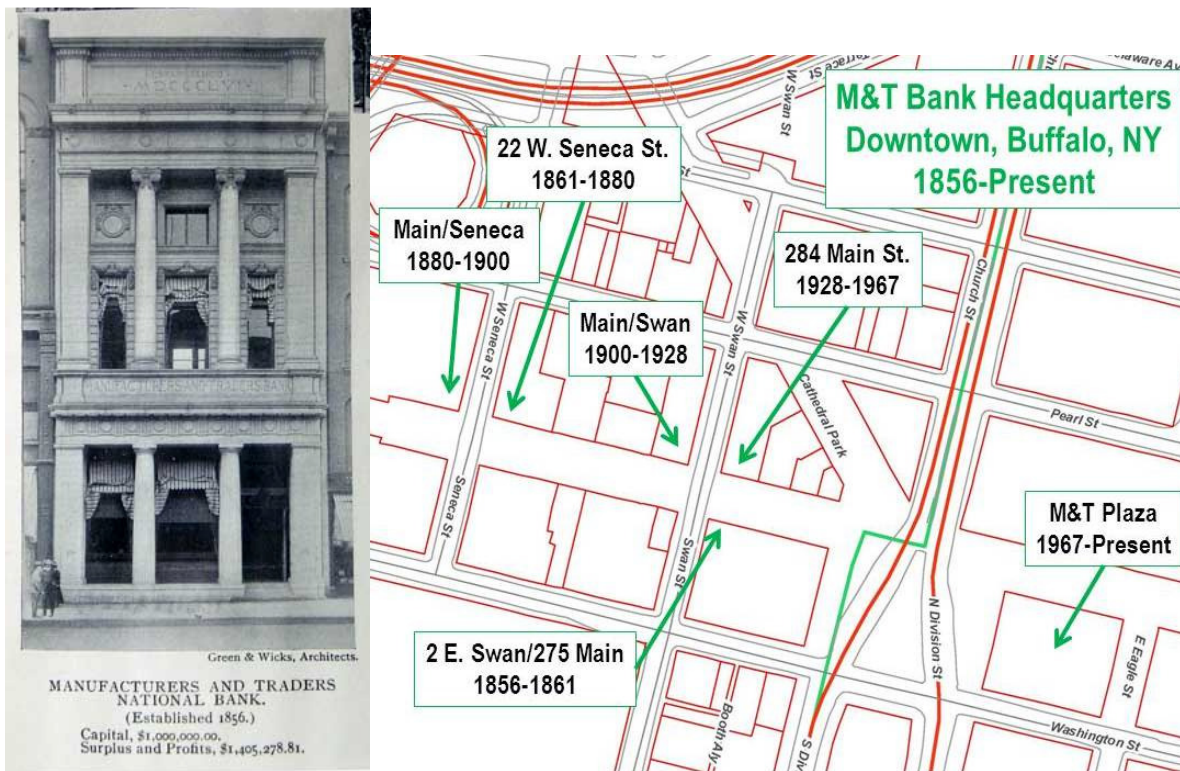


Figure 1. The first headquarters M&T constructed in 1899-1900; map of all headquarters locations, 1856-present.

In 1899, M&T constructed its first headquarters on the west side of Main Street one building south of West Swan Street and moved into it on May 14, 1900. The three-story building was

designed by the Buffalo-based architectural firm Green & Wicks and constructed using light grey New England granite. Green & Wicks gave the building an impressive classical appearance, made all the more challenging because the building was nestled in between two others. Two Doric columns divided the first floor into three sections and a pair of two-story Ionic columns separated the space on the second and third stories. At the top of the building, carved into the stone, was M&T's proud declaration "Established 1856" in Roman numerals.

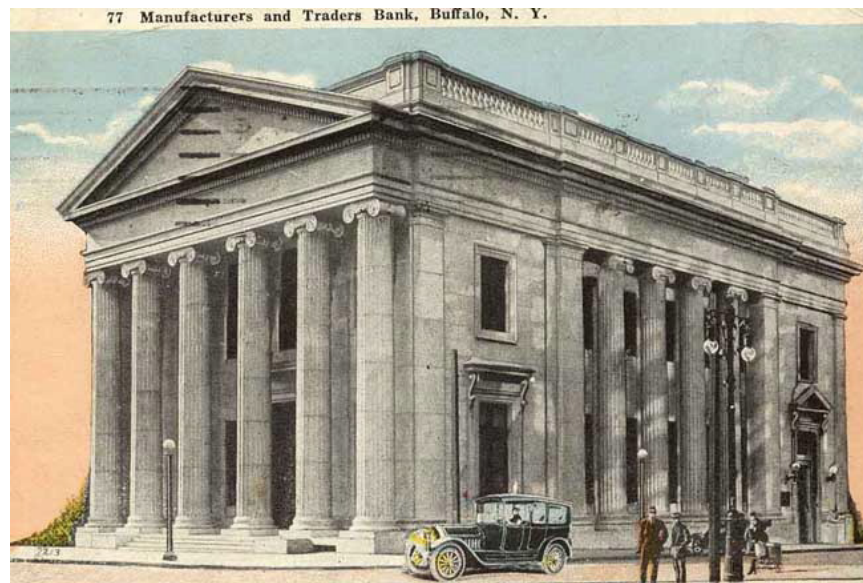


Figure 2. M&T constructed its iconic headquarters in 1913-1914 based on classic temple architecture.

The gleaming white marble surface of One M&T Plaza was foreshadowed in M&T's subsequent headquarters building, constructed during 1913-1914. In May 1913, M&T demolished the old Townsend "Block" business building on the southwest corner of Main and Swan Streets, northerly adjacent to its offices at the time. The Townsend Block was the last remnant of the original Charles Townsend-George Coit property that included the business block and Coit House. The property was occupied by members of the Townsend and Coit families from 1811 until 1865. The Coit House avoided demolition when it was relocated to Buffalo's Allentown neighborhood in 1867.

A brilliant white marble temple was built on the site of the Townsend Block at 268 Main Street, carefully constructed around the existing M&T building, so as not to disturb business during the construction process. The building was over four stories high at its peak and its interior was finished with white and green marble accented with yellow Pavonazzo marble. Marble Roman benches were placed throughout the main banking floor. Eight massive green marble pillars supported an ornamental bronze gallery in the rear of the banking floor while ceiling skylights flooded the building with light. M&T's marble temple headquarters was designed by the Philadelphia-based architectural firm Furness, Evans & Co. The firm's founder, Frank Furness

(1839-1912), was a well-known architect who trained with the famed New York City designer Richard Morris Hunt (1827-1895). Furness died in 1912 and the M&T building's construction was supervised by Furness' partner and longtime draftsman, Allen Evans (1849-1925).



Figure 3. M&T's temple headquarters was the model for its branch offices, such as this one at 1036 Broadway St. (extant, but no longer an M&T branch).

M&T's headquarters quickly became iconic, and several branch offices were designed by Buffalo architects Bley & Lyman, constructed as smaller versions of its classically designed headquarters. Two of these branch structures, constructed in 1923, are extant at 1036 Broadway Street and 133 Grant Street (they are no longer M&T branches).



Figure 4. M&T moved across the street to the former Fidelity headquarters (shown in background) in 1928.

Despite being part of its company branding during the 1920s, M&T did not occupy its stunningly beautiful temple headquarters very long. Rapid growth through mergers with the Fidelity Trust Company (1925) and People's Bank (1927) required M&T to move to larger quarters. In January 1928, M&T moved across the street to 284 Main Street on the northwest corner of Swan Street (formerly Fidelity Trust's headquarters). The building was designed by Green & Wicks and constructed during 1901-1903. It was enlarged by M&T in 1926-1927 and the job was entrusted to the New York City architectural firm Halsey, McCormack & Helmer in association with the Buffalo-based architectural firm Esenwein & Johnson. A narrow (two window wide) ten story addition expanded the building to the north along Main Street. To the west along Swan Street, a large four story addition was built. It was designed to support ten stories for future growth. The building's exterior was faced with stone on the first two stories and brick on the upper floors.



Figure 5. Opulent interior of M&T's headquarters in the former Fidelity Trust building, 284 Main Street (extant).

In its interior, an opulent banking floor was accented with painted murals. Italian Travenelle marble was used on its walls and 22 square marble columns supported the ceiling. When completed, the enlarged M&T building was the largest banking building in Buffalo.

The three decades following M&T's move to its new headquarters were challenging ones for Buffalo and the entire nation. The Great Depression and the post-World War II migration to the suburbs took their toll on downtown Buffalo.

## **One M&T Plaza’s Construction Rationale, Architect Selection, and Design**

In November 1961 M&T ushered in the concept of downtown redevelopment when it announced it had purchased an entire prominent downtown block bounded by Main, Eagle, Washington, and North Division Streets. With a price tag of \$1.75 million, the acquisition of the block was the most expensive real estate deal in Buffalo to that time. Expectations were high when M&T announced the construction of its new headquarters. The project was hailed as the greatest single improvement in Buffalo’s history, one that would change the entire face of downtown. The site’s new address was 345 Main Street.

In late 1961 or in early January 1962, five or six architectural firms, including Minoru Yamasaki (1912 – 1986), were invited to Buffalo so M&T management could select a designer for its new planned headquarters. As a result of these presentations, in January 1962 M&T signed a contract with New York City architects Carson, Ludin & Shaw, designers of a number of skyscrapers in New York and several bank buildings. However M&T management was disappointed with the preliminary drawings produced by Carson, Ludin & Shaw throughout 1962.

By February 1963, M&T management grew impatient with the progression of its new headquarters project and was concerned its local competition (The Western New York Savings Bank, Marine Trust, and Erie County Savings Bank) was moving forward with major construction projects in close proximity to 345 Main Street. As a result of its growing dissatisfaction with the project’s progression, in May 1963 Dudley M. Irwin Jr., an M&T Bank executive vice president, was appointed to replace the chairman of the building committee. In July, Irwin was elected director of the Main-Eagle Corporation, an M&T Bank wholly-owned subsidiary formed to acquire property and construct its new headquarters.

In late July 1963, Irwin and M&T president Charles W. Millard Jr. flew to Detroit to visit Minoru Yamasaki. After spending the day with Yamasaki and his associates, Irwin told Millard he “saw no point in looking further, that this was our man,” and Millard enthusiastically agreed. In early August, Millard journeyed to New York to pay a \$10,000 termination fee, canceling M&T’s contract with Carson, Lundin & Shaw. Shortly thereafter, M&T signed a contract with Yamasaki.

In August 1963 M&T announced it had retained Minoru Yamasaki & Associates, Inc. to design its new bank building. One of the reasons M&T selected Yamasaki was because “his designs are characterized by a broader, richer, and more ornamental contemporary styling.” Duane Lyman & Associates, who had previously worked with M&T 40 years before, were retained as the Buffalo-based architectural firm to supervise construction and work through details at the local level.



Figure 6. Minoru Yamasaki was hired by M&T (Irwin, 2nd row left and Millard, front row right) in August 1963 to design One M&T Plaza.

At the time Yamasaki was retained to design M&T's headquarters, he had recently completed the 20-story IBM Building in Seattle and had been hired to design New York City's World Trade Center. Yamasaki's design for M&T and his twin towers for the World Trade Center were conceived at nearly the same time and both had their genesis in the IBM Building.



Figure 7. One M&T Plaza owes structural and appearance similarities to Yamasaki's 1962 IBM Building in Seattle (left) and 1963 World Trade Center in New York City (right).

When M&T had retained Yamasaki, the Seattle-born architect of Japanese descent was 50 years old and already world-famous. Yamasaki distinguished himself in the late 1950s with sensuous, textile-like structures that rallied against the glass-box International Style of skyscraper architecture pervasive in the U.S. at the time. His first internationally recognized design, the Pacific Science Center, featured iconic arches and was constructed by the City of Seattle for the 1962 World's Fair. In January 1963 Yamasaki was on the cover of *Time* magazine. Yamasaki and fellow architect Edward Durell Stone (1902-1978) are considered to be the two master twentieth century practitioners of “New Formalism,” which blended elements of classicism with modernist designs. Buffalo is fortunate to have examples from both great architects; Stone designed the Buffalo News Building in 1973.



Yamasaki preferred to encase his buildings in structural steel columns and create a tube-like structure where most of the building’s weight is borne on its exterior walls. The steel columns were then covered with an artistic finish. In the case of the IBM building, the finish was precast concrete, while for M&T, Yamasaki designed a specialty concrete aggregate of natural stone. The massive World Trade Center’s twin towers demanded an Alcoa specially developed lightweight aluminum-alloy metal skin to avoid imposing tremendous extraneous load on the structures.

The structural similarity between Yamasaki’s design of the World Trade Center and One M&T Plaza resulted in M&T’s exterior being designed with alternating wide continuous structural steel columns and narrow continuous decorative columns (referred to as mullions) on the Main and Washington Street sides of the building and exclusive use of mullions on the North Division and Eagle Street sides of the building. The spacing of the mullions afforded Yamasaki’s signature use of extremely narrow vertical windows. It is believed Yamasaki’s use of these narrow windows arose from his own personal fear of heights, a great irony for a man who designed some of the world’s tallest skyscrapers.

On August 18, 1964 Yamasaki’s 21-story M&T headquarters design was unveiled to the public. The reaction was ecstatic. It was called “dazzling,” “spectacular,” and “noble.” Yamasaki was excited because the M&T building afforded him the rare opportunity to shape an entire city block. The integration of nature, society, and architecture was given equal importance in Yamasaki’s design. A key design feature for the new building was a plaza or “promenade” that allowed the skyscraper to be set back from Main Street. Yamasaki wanted the 75 by 225 foot plaza to be landscaped with trees, flowers, a fountain, and to be “a place to sit in the sun.” Yamasaki believed that beauty and function must go hand-in-hand and hoped that the new

M&T building would uplift spirits and bring joy. He envisioned the new building would be a beautiful background for the lively social activity that would take place on the plaza.



Figure 8. One M&T Plaza's design was completed in 1964.

### **Constructing One M&T Plaza**

After the site was prepared, construction of M&T's new headquarters took place over nearly a two year period, from June 1965 until its opening in May 1967. Over 300 workers were involved in its construction.

John W. Cowper Co. was retained as general contractor and Worthington, Skilling, Helle & Jackson was retained as the engineering firm. Cowper had extensive construction experience with major skyscrapers in downtown Buffalo including the Rand Building, Buffalo City Hall, and the Buffalo and Erie County Central Library. The groundbreaking ceremony for the new M&T building was held on June 16, 1965.

A key design element of the M&T building is its central service core on Washington Street containing stairs, elevators, utility rooms, and service risers. In addition to housing service components, it also provides a structural backbone for the building and allows for unobstructed floors within the building. Using a slip-form construction method to expedite the building's erection, the 50-foot square core commenced prior to the construction of the office floors. Built of reinforced concrete, the pouring of 1,200 cubic feet of concrete for the core began on September 10, 1965. Approximately 25 cement finishers, carpenters, and iron works worked day and night on three shifts to construct the core in about two weeks' time. The core rose at the rate of one foot per hour, which enabled the completion of 1½ floors each day. This impressive feat was directly attributable to the employment of the slip-form construction method, the first time it had been used in an office building in Buffalo (it is typically used for



bridges, towers, dams, and similar structures). The slip-form process started when 50 by 50 foot wood platforms, three decks high, were erected around a concrete foundation. A crane placed on top of the platform lifted concrete from ground level, which was then poured into the forms created by the platforms to create 10-inch thick walls. As the concrete was poured, the platforms and crane were lifted by 71 hydraulic jacks, climbing on rods one inch in diameter which remained buried in concrete. As the platforms ascended, 300 tons of reinforcing bars were installed. Openings were inserted for elevator entrances, doorways, duct openings, floor slab recesses, beam pockets and other elements to be attached to the core. The service core was fully complete by December. To celebrate, two large Christmas trees were placed on top of the 21-story core on December 8, 1965.



Figure 9. One M&T Plaza's Washington Street central service core serves as the building's spine.

The building's steel skeleton began to be assembled on January 10, 1966 and was complete by June 21, 1966. The newly-developed V50 structural steel produced by Bethlehem Steel Corporation was used for the framework of the building, the first time utilized in Buffalo. The strength of the V50 sections permitted the use of slender steel which reduced the building's overall weight. V50 steel has yield-point strength of 50,000 pounds per square inch, or the ability to support 12 two-ton automobiles on each square inch.

Over 1,200 tons of V50 steel and 2,100 tons of A36 steel were fabricated and erected. An additional 2,700 tons of steel were used for structural shapes, piling, reinforcing bars, and wire rope. The beams used for the building's horizontal construction were 70 feet long, installed as clear-span trusses. As a result of structural steel columns being incorporated vertically along

the east and west sides of the building and the use of horizontal clear-span trusses, the building's interior space is free of weight-bearing structural columns. Around the building's first floor perimeter, boxed steel columns rise to the 35-foot height of the lobby and are joined by gracefully arched steel spandrels.



Figure 10. Bethlehem Steel's new V50 beams were used on One M&T Plaza's exterior and gives it a slender yet strong appearance.

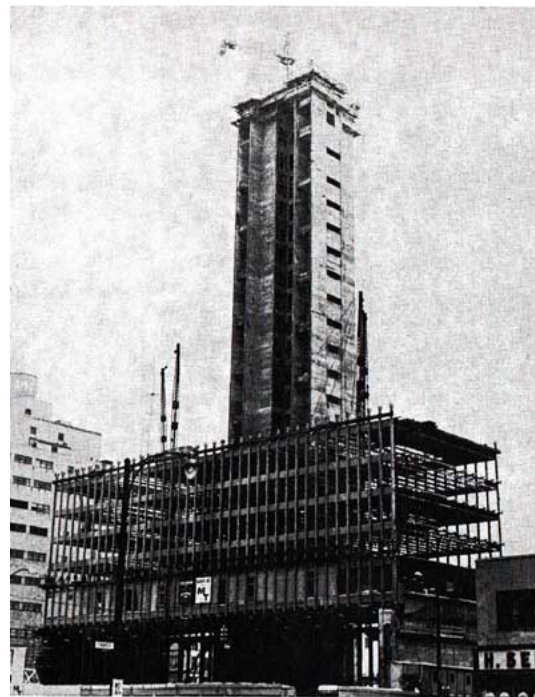


Figure 11. M&T Plaza under construction, March 1966. The steel frame exterior with no interior columns and completed 21-story central service core is visible.

Hidden from view was the M&T building's impressive underground construction. The building's foundation required 1,020 tons of steel fabricated into 675 H-piles. The piles were driven 60 feet below ground level through subsurface sand and gravel to bedrock. After capping, fabricated reinforcing bars were used for column footings. The concrete floors of its parking levels (with capacity for over 100 vehicles) under the building were also steel reinforced. One hundred and fifty one (151) tons of slabform (a formed steel sheet) were used for its composite floor composition.

On December 21, 1966 the M&T building's cornerstone was laid in one of the plaza's green marble planters just north of its Main Street entrance. In addition to Irwin, M&T president Claude F. Shuchter and Millard, who was by then chairman, were present. Just before its sealing, Millard tossed a golf ball into the cornerstone.

By spring 1967, the over \$14 million building was completed and opened on May 15, 1967. It was given a new name and its own address, One M&T Plaza. Governor Nelson Rockefeller took part in One M&T Plaza's official dedication on June 13, 1967 and called it a "fine and daring structure." In 1979, when Yamasaki recalled One M&T Plaza's opening, he said: "the plaza and the white materials of the facades caused excitement..." M&T Plaza's immaculately white exterior stood in stark contrast to other downtown buildings, many of which were coated with black soot, a consequence of Buffalo's significant manufacturing base.

### **Exterior Features**

At 315 feet high and containing 261,000 square feet, the building is 21 stories high and has three levels of underground parking. One M&T Plaza's exterior footprint is 190 feet on its Main and Washington Street sides by 72 feet on its North Division and Eagle Street sides.

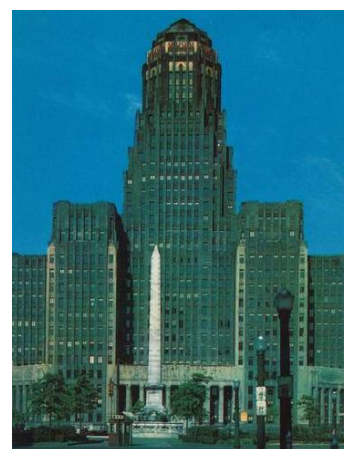


Figure 12. One M&T Plaza's white exterior contrasted with other Buffalo buildings covered in soot during the 1960s. The M&T building's visual upward thrust is accomplished through its use of continuous exterior structural columns and 4,000 narrow floor-to-ceiling windows.

One M&T Plaza's exterior is a treat for the eyes. A skyscraper that has been called a modern Venetian palace, One M&T Plaza is unlike any other built in Buffalo before or since. The building's two primary colors are white and green. From the 3rd to 21st story, an upward visual thrust is accomplished through the facade's use of regularly-spaced wide structural vertical columns and narrow mullions that provide shielding from the sun. The columns and mullions are covered with 3,450 12-foot long satin finish pre-stressed concrete aggregate sections embedded with white Georgia marble chips and white silica sand. The mullions are crack-proof and because they do not contain the scarfings of natural marble, are designed to be self-cleaning during periods of rain. At the top of the building, the 21st story is demarcated by a lower white-colored spandrel band and an upper horizontal aggregate band at roofline. Specialty cruciform-shaped mullions are joined just above the lower band, creating small open rectangles. The special treatment of this floor appears to cap off the building.

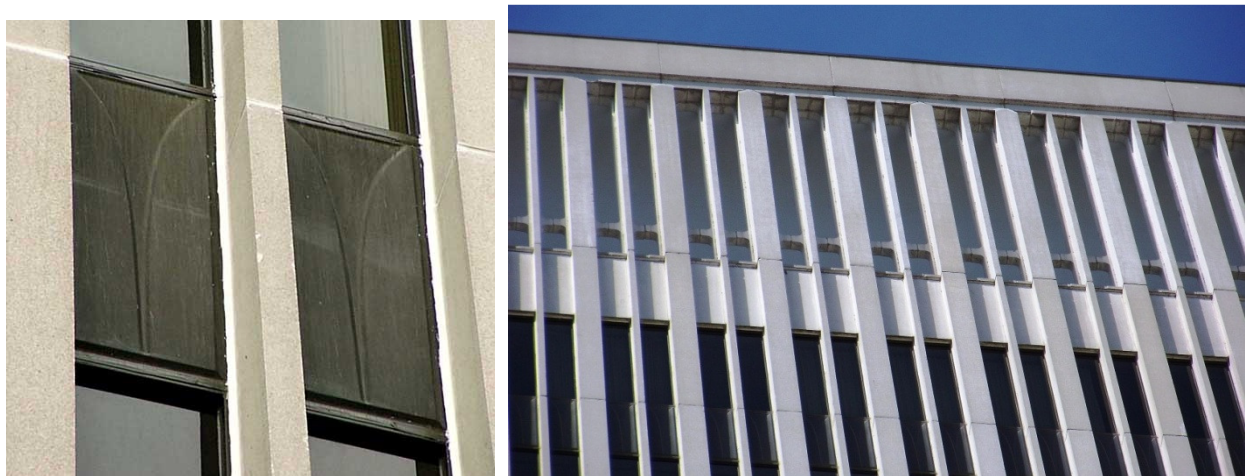


Figure 13. Embossed bronze colored panels utilized between floors (left) are decorative and allow the windows appear to be continuous from the base of the skyscraper until interrupted by horizontal bands at its top (right).

On each floor, the sections between the mullions are filled with narrow floor-to-ceiling windows, about 4,000 in all. Between floors, windows are separated by dark bronze-finished anodized aluminum spandrel panels embossed with a stylized “v” giving the appearance of leaves growing up the sides of the building.

The mass of the building rests on arched steel columns sheathed in marble, a Yamasaki signature design feature. The arches are glassed-in to form towering windows for the oversized first floor (at a height of 35 feet, it is really two stories high). Twenty three thousand square feet (23,000) of white Taconic marble quarried in Proctor, Vermont is installed in panels measuring two feet by four feet and is 1¼ inches thick. The intensity of the white marble base and marble aggregate vertical columns and mullions above is contrasted with dark green marble, also installed on the first story. Italian Verde Antique marble is installed on four inset

panels on the Main and Washington Street sides of One M&T Plaza and the entire North Division and Eagle Street sides of the building.



Figure 14. One M&T Plaza rests on a 35-foot first story base, covered with white and green marble panels and tall arched windows.

### **Floor Assignments and Interior Features**

Inside One M&T Plaza's central service core (which bisects the building symmetrically on its Washington Street side), are two banks of elevators on each side of the core. On the south side, passenger elevators travel to floors 1-10, and on the north side, passenger elevators travel from floors 10-21. The north side also contains a service elevator.



Figure 15. Because of M&T's siting, upper floors provide dramatic views of Lake Erie. In this photograph, its Washington Street central service core which bisects the building is visible.

Because of Yamasaki's use of structural steel on the exterior of the building as well as the use of clear-span horizontal steel trusses, each floor provides nearly 12,000 square feet (170 by 70 feet) of unobstructed space free from interior supporting columns. When One M&T Plaza was built, the 1st floor was designed to be its flagship banking branch, while floors 2 through 10 were used for its own business purposes. The 10th floor also contained a cafeteria. The 19th floor was reserved for M&T's board room and executive management offices.



Figure 16. The Plaza Suite restaurant offered panoramic views of Buffalo on M&T Plaza's 20th floor.

The 20th floor was leased to a restaurant called "Plaza Suite" (it closed in early 1980s). The 20th floor, like other upper floors, offers panoramic views of Buffalo and Lake Erie. The 21st floor was designed for mechanical purposes and floors 11 through 18 were originally leased to non-M&T tenants.

M&T hired an outside firm for One M&T Plaza's interior décor. While the M&T building committee was impressed with Knoll Associates, they ultimately awarded the contract to Ford & Earl Design Associates of Troy, Michigan. While many of the floors within One M&T Plaza have been reconfigured and re-purposed during its nearly 50-year history, four floors remain true to their original design and intended use: floors 1, 9, 10, and 19.

Serving as the headquarters' branch, the 1st floor is impressive with its 35-foot tall ceiling, recessed lighting and arched windows. The elegantly sparse interior is richly finished with teak wood and white textured Travertine marble. Its Main Street side is dominated by the banking lobby that takes up the entire interior space. A long, uninterrupted teller counter is made from teak wood. A drive-thru teller was originally designed for the Washington Street side of the branch, but is no longer in operation.

Safe deposit boxes and the cash vault are located in the lower level. The vault door weighs 16 tons and is 20 inches thick. The door leading to the safe deposit box area weighs 13 tons and is

16 inches thick. A separate 10-inch thick, 10 ton door protects the entrances to safe deposit boxes and cash vault.

The 1st floor was originally carpeted in a dark olive hue. Yielding to the practicality of Buffalo's winters, portions of the first floor carpeting were replaced with terrazzo and greenstone, similar to that used on the plaza. These changes were undertaken in the mid-1990s and were approved by Yamasaki & Associates, Inc., several years before the firm closed on December 31, 2009.



Figure 17. The first floor branch is impressive with column-free 35' ceilings, travertine marble, teak wood teller line and floor-to-ceiling arched windows.

Above the 1st floor, Ford & Earl color-coded the floors to the elevator stops: even numbered floors were carpeted in burnt orange and odd numbered floors were carpeted in deep red. The 9th floor was decorated more traditionally than the remainder of the office floors because it was designed to service M&T's Trust and Investment Services clients. While metal desks were used on other office floors, on the 9th floor dark wood desks, deep russet carpet, and ochre crushed leather guest chairs were employed. Wood paneling and molding was used in strategic places for warmth, elegance, and a traditional quality.

The 10th floor was designed to house an employee cafeteria. Color was utilized to provide a bright, sunny environment for employees. The lobby carpet was originally brilliant orange and red tweed, a distinct contrast to the subtle shades of other lobby carpeting. Panels of gay, striped Mexican cotton were installed along the drapery wall. A lounge (no longer extant) was

furnished by fabric-covered oak furniture in tones of red, orange, and yellow. As a nod to the *Mad Men* era, the room was also furnished with cigarette tables as well as tables for reading and playing cards.

The 19th floor, designed for M&T's executive management offices and board room, is richly finished with teak wood and white Travertine marble. The ceiling is very high and offices are impressive with floor-to-ceiling teak wood doors. In addition to housing exceptional art, an outstanding feature of the 19th floor is its board room, located on the building's northwest side. The room is 55 feet long and contains a 37 foot long oval rosewood table.

### **The Plaza**

A year after the building was dedicated, the plaza that both defined and distinguished M&T's new headquarters was finished. The plaza boundaries are demarcated by a low wall that doubles as a seating area. The plaza looks lovely surrounded by landscaping which includes 3,000 shrubs, buttonwood Sycamore trees, and other flowering plants. The artistic centerpiece of the plaza is its oval reflecting pool.



Figure 18. Untitled fountain designed by Harry Bertoia was installed at M&T Plaza in 1968.

On August 30, 1968, a three ton, 18 foot long copper and bronze sculpture was installed in the pool. The sculpture created a fountain in the reflecting pool by channeling water from the pool through 16 connections that spill over its undulating contours and back into the reflecting pool. The sculpture's green patina was meant to harmonize with the greenstone used in the plaza



and skyscraper. Although the abstract sculpture defies definition, it has been compared to a great sea shell, a giant bird or the waves of the sea. The sculpture is the work of Italian-born American artist Arieto (Harry) Bertoia (1915-1978). Although Bertoia designed a wide array of art including jewelry and furniture, he is best remembered as an architectural sculptor who designed over 50 large works associated with buildings across the United States. Events that occurred while Bertoia studied at the Cranbrook Academy of Art eventually led to the sculpture at One M&T Plaza. In 1939, the same year that Kleinhans Music Hall was being constructed, Cranbrook director Eliel Saarinen asked Bertoia to reopen its metalworking department. It was Bertoia's classmate, Eero Saarinen (Eliel's son), who enticed Bertoia to design large sculptures for important new architectural works. Eero Saarinen commissioned Bertoia's first architectural sculptural commission in 1953 for the GM Building in Warren, Michigan. Two years later, Saarinen again commissioned Bertoia to design a sculpture for a chapel at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that Saarinen was designing at the time.

Operated for over 40 years, the M&T sculpture has withstood Buffalo's weather very well and been repaired only a few times. In 1984, the fountain was repaired by Harry Bertoia's son Val. In 2010, M&T embarked on a fountain restoration project and Val was once again retained to refurbish the sculpture his father had created. During its most recent refurbishment, the fountain was removed with the use of a crane and its underlying reflecting pool completely rebuilt.



Figure 19. Since 1969 M&T Plaza has hosted its popular event series during the summer.

In 1969, Yamasaki's vision for One M&T Plaza was fully realized when M&T Bank began hosting concerts to help invigorate downtown Buffalo culturally and socially. Every year since, M&T

brings the arts alive for everyone who visits, works and lives in downtown Buffalo. Nearly two million people have seen more than 18,000 performers at M&T Plaza since the event began.



Figure 20. For special events, M&T Plaza's uppermost floor, separated by a horizontal white-colored band, is dramatically lit at night with appropriate colors.

During the winter, One M&T Plaza is a staple in Buffalo's annual holiday traditions. On chilly December nights, the uppermost floors of One M&T Plaza are cheerily lit with red and green lights, visible for miles in every direction. Because the plaza is so large, a snow-melting system was installed beneath it, making the center of the plaza from the street to the main entrance easily accessible during winter months.

**Fate of M&T's Former Headquarters**



Figure 21. The columns from M&T's former headquarters are installed at Baird Point on the University at Buffalo's north campus.

Of M&T's former headquarters, its marble temple building at 268 Main Street was sold to the Federal Reserve Bank and demolished in 1959. Marble columns were salvaged from the building and now stand at Baird Point next to Lake LaSalle on the University at Buffalo's North

Campus where they were dedicated as a memorial to servicemen and servicewomen. Remnants of the columns can also be found in Buffalo's Allentown neighborhood in front of 469 Franklin Street, the former Tony Sisti Gallery. The M&T building at 284 Main Street is extant and occupied by the New York State Department of Labor. It still contains one of the most opulent banking floors in Buffalo.

### **M&T Plaza Legacy**

Over its 150 year history, M&T Bank has been located in many buildings in downtown Buffalo, but it has been in its flagship One M&T Plaza building longer than any other of its previous homes. One M&T Plaza, a building project that ushered in Buffalo's downtown redevelopment in the early 1960s, has been more artistically successful than any of the corporate construction projects that followed it. M&T is the sole survivor of the other Buffalo-based banking institutions which erected corporate skyscrapers during the 1960s. M&T Bank's commitment to Buffalo and its success through its current leadership of chairman Robert G. Wilmers and president Mark J. Czarnecki has allowed the building to be impeccably maintained and ensured the structure remains a pearly white jewel in Buffalo's architectural crown.

Like its former temple headquarters before it, One M&T Plaza has served as an inspiration for M&T's branch design. With over 800 branch locations in several states, it has many more than the approximately 60 it had when One M&T Plaza was constructed and when it occupied its temple-like headquarters on Main and Swan Streets. In 2010, a prototype branch designed by international firm Pentagram, along with Buffalo firms Hamilton Houston Lownie Architects and Kideney Architects, was implemented at Southgate Plaza in West Seneca, New York. The Southgate Plaza branch features a colonnade inspired by One M&T Plaza and a large, open banking hall that recalls branch construction from the early twentieth century. Other branches based on this design were constructed in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania and Maryland.



Figure 22. M&T's Southgate Branch design is inspired by One M&T Plaza.

## **Restoration and Maintenance of One M&T Plaza**

In 2010 M&T undertook a reconstruction of the greenstone plaza in front of the One M&T Plaza tower and underground parking below. The \$6.5 million renovation included the replacement of deteriorated Vermont greenstone with Quebec granite to prevent water seepage into the renovated underground garage. That year, M&T's current leaders opened the time capsule sealed in 1966. Its contents included:

- M&T's 1965 Annual Report
- Charter for the City of Buffalo from 1961
- The Frontier's Year 1965 publication of "The Economy"
- Issue of the Courier Express from December 21, 1966
- Issue of the Buffalo Evening News from August 18, 1964, featuring an M&T story
- Photos of the plaza construction from 1964 through 1966
- A dollar bill, \$2 bill, dollar coin, half dollar, quarter, dime, nickel and penny
- Report highlighting One M&T Plaza construction
- M&T bylaws, dated December 9, 1965
- Several old issues of the *Observer*, including the first issue from April 16, 1965
- Buffalo Magazine from November 1964 and March 1965, both featuring M&T stories
- Lake Erie report from the Buffalo League of Women Voters
- Proposed local law No. 1, proposing an administrative code for Erie County
- Erie County charter, dated November 3, 1959
- Buffalo and WNY map, printed by M&T
- "A story of M&T, a frontier city and a bank" by George Newbury
- Erie County Brochure
- Millard's golf ball

The following new items, representing M&T and downtown Buffalo in 2010, were added to the time capsule when resealed:

- A BlackBerry
- "Life in 2010" document with number of employees, asset size, branch numbers, as well as cultural trends, recent headlines and average costs
- WNY Heritage Magazine celebrating M&T's 150th anniversary
- Buffalo Day of Caring Photo and article from mtb.com
- Account brochures
- Check card, credit card, Bills check card and Ravens check card
- Disks with recent marketing advertisements and radio / television commercials
- Letters to the future from students of Westminster Community Charter School
- M&T Plaza Event Schedule
- 2009 annual report and 2010 first and second quarter results

- High Five standards and a High Five card
- Westminster Community Charter School annual report
- Buffalo Bills M&T Family Corner stadium photo
- Southgate branch photos and news release
- M&T's footprint map
- The Buffalo News from August 24, 2010
- The Wall Street Journal from August 24, 2010
- The 2009 Community Involvement Report with all regional inserts
- Recent article and editorial reprints (e.g., "Banking the Buffalo Way," "The man who made M&T big-league")
- The last print *Observer* and several of the most popular online stories to date
- Mortgage rate sheet
- A piece of the greenstone and a list of construction workers for the project
- The Millard Fillmore dollar coin and the new 2010 pennies
- The M&T Story power point presentation
- MTB.com screen print
- Proclamations from Mayor Brown, the County Executive's office and the Governor

As part of the final phase of the plaza reconstruction, One M&T Plaza's Washington Street vestibule was recently enlarged to accommodate new security requirements and to replace the greenstone on the planter walls to match the granite installed on the plaza. The curtain wall system that comprises the vestibule was manufactured in Italy, near Venice.

### **Conclusion**

One M&T Plaza is significant because of the innovative use technology used to create a corporate skyscraper that is both beautiful and inspiring. The building is impressive any time of the year, but Yamasaki's genius and vision is fully realized during one of Buffalo's picture-perfect summer days when the plaza is filled with hundreds of people enjoying the tranquil Bertoia sculpture gently flowing with water, the natural landscaping in full bloom and most of all, enriching entertainment. At that magical moment, diverse residents and visitors of Western New York join together to enjoy the sights and sounds of One M&T Plaza and find their "place in the sun."

Christopher N. Brown

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Updated for Society of Architectural Historians 66<sup>th</sup> Conference Tour, April 14, 2013

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## Appendix

### ***One M&T Plaza Timeline of Significant Dates***

- ❖ November 1961 – Land acquired
- ❖ January 1962 – Architectural design contract signed with Carson, Ludin & Shaw
- ❖ May 1963 – Building committee chairman replaced by Dudley M. Irwin, Jr.
- ❖ July 1963 – Carson, Ludin & Shaw contract voided by M&T
- ❖ July 1963 – New architectural design contract signed with Minoru Yamasaki
- ❖ August 1964 – Yamasaki’s preliminary design completed and made public
- ❖ June 16, 1965 – Groundbreaking ceremony
- ❖ September 1965 – Central service core constructed
- ❖ December 1965 – Central service core fully complete
- ❖ January 10, 1966 – Steel skeleton began to be erected
- ❖ June 21, 1966 – Steel skeleton complete
- ❖ December 21, 1966 – Cornerstone sealed
- ❖ June 13, 1967 – New building officially dedicated
- ❖ Summer of 1969 – One M&T Plaza Event Series initiated

### ***Dimensions***

#### *Exterior*

- Height: 315 feet (sixth tallest building in Buffalo)
- Footprint: 190 x 72 feet
- Lot size: 240 x 220 feet
- Plaza area: 210 feet wide x 75 feet deep

#### *Interior*

- Total square feet: 261,000
- Floor dimensions: 170 x 70 feet
- Floor square feet: nearly 12,000
- First floor height: 35 feet

<b>Companies involved in One M&amp;T Plaza’s Construction</b>	
<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Architect	Minoru Yamasaki and Associates
Supervising architect	Duane Lyman
Engineers	Worthing, Skilling, Helle & Jackson
General Contractor	John W. Cowper, Inc.
Subcontractor: Masonry materials	Anchor Concrete Products, Inc.
Subcontractor: Concrete	Buffalo Gravel Corporation
Subcontractor: Cement materials	Buffalo Builders Supply Co., Inc.
Subcontractor: Duct Work	Buffalo Sheet Metals, Inc.
Subcontractor: Slip-form consultant engineer	J. F. Camellerie, P.E. (Huntington, NY)

Subcontractor: Finish hardware	DeRonde Hardware, Inc.
Subcontractor: Louvers	Dusing & Hunt, Inc.
Subcontractor: Sash erection	Haney Erection Services, Inc.
Subcontractor: Slip-form supervision	B. M. Heede, Inc. (Rye, NY)
Subcontractor: Material testing	Robert W. Hunt Co., Engineers (Chicago, IL)
Subcontractor: Marble and greenstone	Loomis Stone and Marble Co.
Subcontractor: Concrete testing	Pittsburgh Testing Laboratory (Pittsburgh, PA)
Subcontractor: Precast concrete units	George Rackle & Sons Co. (Cleveland, OH)
Subcontractor: Toilet accessories	Toilet Room Accessories, Co. (Cleveland, OH)
Subcontractor: Hollow metal glass & glazing	Kawneer Company, Inc. (Niles, MI)
Subcontractor: Resilient floor covering	Mackwirth Bros. Company
Subcontractor: Exterior wall thoroeseal coating and caulk work	Raymond E. Kelley, Inc. (Bowmansville, NY)
Subcontractor: Vault and security system	Diebold, Inc.
Subcontractor: Structural steel, piling, reinforcing and metal work	Bethlehem steel company
Subcontractor: Hollow metal doors & frames	Pioneer Fireproof (Carlstadt, NJ)
Subcontractor: Permanent stay-in-place forms computer floors	Lerch-Hubbell, Inc.
Subcontractor: Miscellaneous metal and architectural metal	Contractors Ornamental Steel Co., Inc.
Subcontractor: Mail chute	Capitol Mail Chute Corporation
Subcontractor: Painting work	Artistic Decorators, Inc.
Subcontractor: Plumbing and standpipe	Carl C. Grimm, Inc.
Subcontractor: Automatic fire sprinkler system	Frontier Sprinkler Corp.
Subcontractor: H Piles	Herbert F. Darling Engineering Contractors (Williamsville, NY)
Subcontractor: Thermal, insulation work, lathing and plastering	Mader Plastering Corp.
Subcontractor: Waterproofing and damp proofing	Joseph A. Sanders and Sons, Inc.
Subcontractor: Ceramic tile and interior marble	DeSpirt Mosaic & Marble Co., Inc.
Subcontractor: Portable staging	Spider Staging Sales Co. (Long Island, NY)
Subcontractor: Induction unit covers	Modulaire Components Corp.
Subcontractor: Aluminum flagpoles	S. J. Eder (Tonawanda, NY)
Subcontractor: Heating, ventilation and air conditioning	Quackenbush Co., Inc.
Subcontractor: Electrical work	Buffalo Electric Co., Inc.
Subcontractor: Gearless elevators	Westinghouse Electric Corp.
Subcontractor: Hydraulic elevators & hydraulic dock leveler	Campbell Elevator Company, Inc.

Subcontractor: Motorized vertical sliding chalkboard	James M. Hawkins Corp.
Subcontractor: Glass and glazing work	Sterling Glass Company, Inc.
Subcontractor: Mill work	D. C. Brunner Co., Inc.
Subcontractor: Foamed inplace insulation	Bilton Insulation and Supply, Inc. (Arlington, VA)
Subcontractor: Curbing	Russo Curb Setting Company (Medina, NY)
Rental Agency	Gurney, Becker & Bourne