



PRESS RELEASE

AIA Michigan
The Beaubien House
553 East Jefferson Avenue
Detroit, MI 48226

Contact:

Cathy Mosley
313-965-4100 | FAX: 313-965-1501
mailto: aiami@aiami.com

Photos available online at [AIA Michigan Press Photos](#)

Contact aiami@aiami.com for additional photos

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

AIA MICHIGAN ANNOUNCES 25 YEAR AWARD RECIPIENT

SmithGroupJJR, in Detroit, MI, was awarded the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Michigan 25 Year Award for The Penobscot Building. The 25 Year Award is given for a distinguished project used for at least 25 years for the same purpose for which it was designed. Honorees are chosen because the original design has made a lasting impact on the design community and continues to be utilized for its intended purpose.

With its tapering setbacks and dramatic height, the 47-story Penobscot Building arose during Detroit's architecturally golden 1920s and remained the city's tallest building until the Renaissance Center a half-century later.

Formally known as the "Greater Penobscot Building", the skyscraper was constructed in 1928 for \$5 million and is the tallest of its two counterpart buildings – the Penobscot Building and Penobscot Annex – located at the prominent intersection of Fort and Griswold in downtown Detroit. Commissioned by Simon J. Murphy, a lumber tycoon from New England, the complex was named after a tribe of Native American Indians settled near the Penobscot River in Maine.

Clad in Indiana Limestone with a granite base, the Penobscot marked a dramatic forward shift in tall-building design in Detroit. After this, no longer could classical wedding-cake ornament define a skyscraper; slender massing and vertical reach dominated from here on. Built on a H-plan in Art Deco style, the architect "extruded the building shaft 30 stories from the ground, then eroded the top 17 stories in a masterful series of sculptural setbacks". Native American and Art Deco influences extend from the four-story entrance archway to the interior in the form of sculptural reliefs and decorative ceilings, floors and fixtures crafted by the famed Detroit artist Corrado Parducci.

Today, the landmark Penobscot stands as a proud symbol of the future growth of the City. "Strategically positioned in the epicenter of Detroit's revitalized business, cultural, sports and entertainment districts", the flagship building is located on the "doorstep of dynamic development" at Campus Martius, and within walking distance of numerous city buildings, fine hotels, restaurants and cultural attractions.

The full-service office tower continues to "promote commerce, industry and prosperity", satisfying a diverse range of corporate needs and providing a variety of retail shops, restaurants and other convenience services. Traditional and contemporary office suites incorporate restored finishes, updated lighting and state-of-the-art telecommunications systems. A one-stop "smart" global conferencing center provides building occupants with easy access to the latest business communications technology.

From busy foot traffic throughout its three shop levels to dramatic exterior lighting seen from miles away, the Penobscot remains as lively at street level as it does on the skyline.

The 25 Year Award will be awarded to SmithGroupJJR at the AIA Michigan Design Awards, on June 5, 2015 at the Woodward Garden Theater in Detroit, MI.

(Building History narrative derived from: SmithGroupJJR history; AIA Detroit Guide to Architecture, 2003; HistoricDetroit.org; PenobscotBuilding.com)

The American Institute of Architects Michigan, headquartered in the historic Beaubien House across from the Renaissance Center in downtown Detroit, established its awards program to bring to public attention the value and importance of architectural excellence and to recognize those whose notable achievements encourage all to make excellence in architecture the standard. Visit www.aiami.com or call 313.965.4100 to learn more.

###