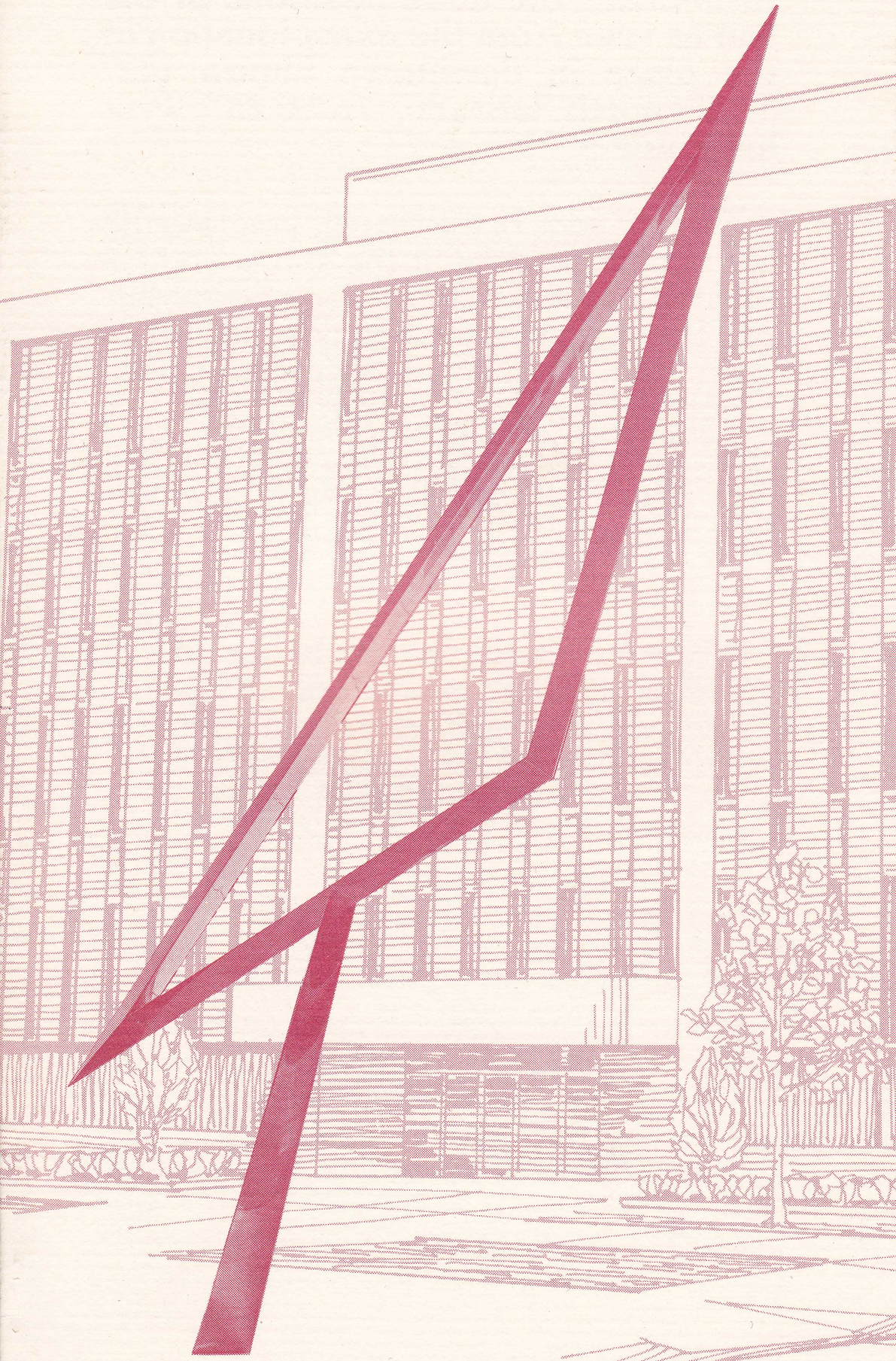
045-040

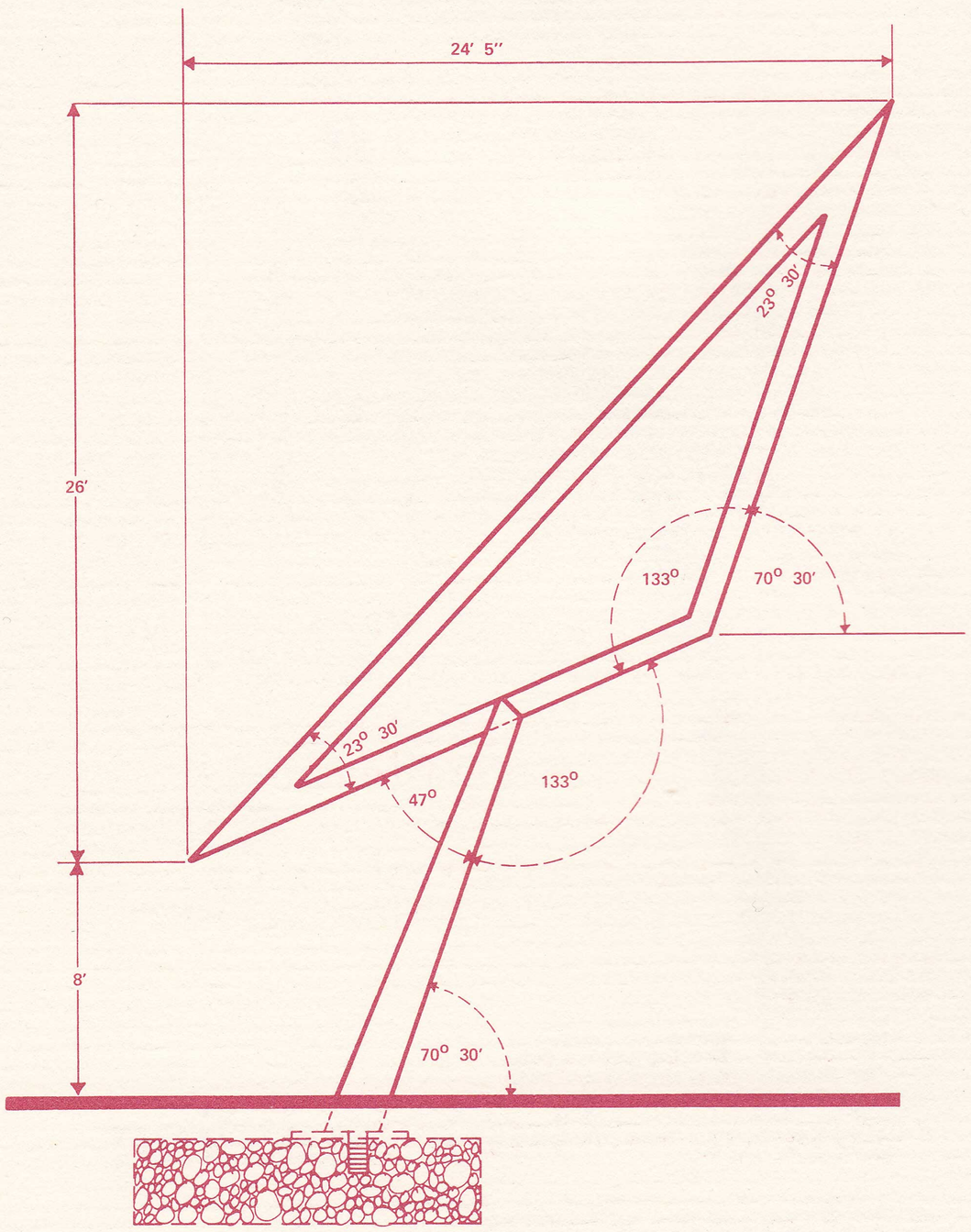
THE SUN TRIANGLE



The Elmira Savings Bank Building
Elmira, New York

The sun triangle in the Elmira Savings Bank Plaza is a landmark uniquely Elmira's. It was designed and erected to indicate the noon positions of the sun as seen from the exact location of the plaza in downtown Elmira. (42° 5′15″ north latitude, 76°50′25″ west longitude.)

The top edge of the triangle points to the sun's noon position at the spring and fall equinoxes, about March 21 and September 22. The bottom edge points to the sun's lowest noon position, at the winter solstice, about December 22. And the steepest edge points to the sun's highest noon position, at the summer solstice, about June 21.



The two acute angles of the triangle are 23½°, the obtuse angle 133°. 23½° is the angle by which the axis of the earth is tilted in relation to the plane of its orbit around the sun.

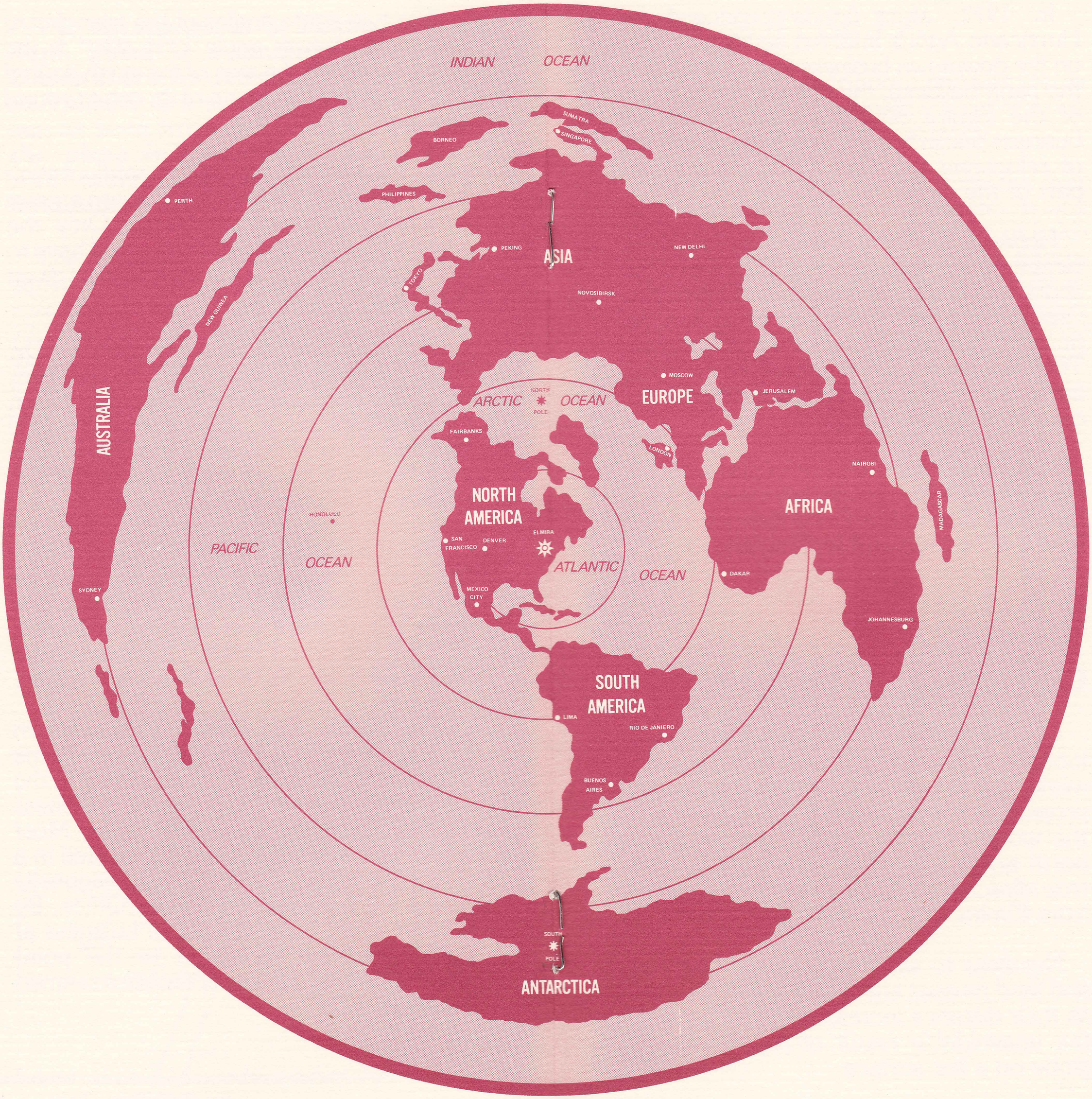
A triangle of the same configuration could be used to indicate the sun's noon positions anywhere on earth. Only the angle of its base to the earth would have to be changed to make it accurate in its given latitude.

The sun triangle was designed by Dr. Athelstan Spilhaus, a scientist and sculptor associated with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. It was built by metal fabricators in Brooklyn, New York. The skin is made of 1/8 inch stainless steel, polished to a mirror finish.

The top of the triangle is 34 feet above the earth. Its base is bolted to a buried concrete block weighing approximately 16 tons. The triangle was erected in March, 1977 by the Arnot Realty Corporation, as part of Elmira's city beautification program.

The beauty and vitality of downtown Elmira have long been a concern of the Elmira Savings Bank. Founded in 1869, the bank has served the central business district for more than 100 years. Most recently, the Main Office was located in a building on East Water Street, diagonally across from the present Main Office. By the late 1960's, the volume of business at that office had increased to the point where the need for larger facilities seemed imminent.

Our place in the sun



In 1972, after floods produced by Hurricane Agnes inflicted severe damage on the downtown business district (including the bank building), the officers and trustees of the Elmira Savings Bank, like other business leaders, considered the possibility of relocating the Main Office in another part of the city.

However, although the alternatives were tempting, the conviction remained that the economic health of downtown Elmira was vital to the entire Twin Tier area, and the decision was made to relocate downtown. Thus the Elmira Savings Bank became the first business to commit to rebuilding in the central business district.

It has been our pleasure to play a part in the revitalization of the business district. We look forward with confidence to the future of our forward-looking city.

Our place in the sun

On the floor of the Elmira Savings Bank lobby is a terrazzo and bronze map of the world, drawn from a unique and fascinating projection. Elmira is shown at the center of the world, with 21 other cities, plus the north and south poles, all shown in their true direction, and at their true distance from Elmira.

Needless to say, the shapes of oceans and land masses are increasingly distorted as their distance increases from Elmira — the unavoidable result of representing a globe on a flat surface.

1831, S.T. & J.A.

The above inscription appears on a stone mounted in the wall between the two elevator doors in the bank lobby.

This is the cornerstone from the first brick building in the City of Elmira. It was located at the Northwest Corner of Lake and East Water Street (site of the Elmira Savings Bank Building) and was built in 1831 by the partnership of STEPHEN TUTTLE and his son-in-law JOHN ARNOT SR. — both very prominent Elmira business men.

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the big

Elmira Savings Bank

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