

## Fiberoptics Technology Corporate Headquarters: *Blending a New Industrial Building into the Rural Landscape*

by *Randall Arendt*

**Location:** 1 Quasset Road, Pomfret, CT

**Developer:** Fiberoptics Technology, Inc., Pomfret, CT

**Development Period:** 1992-93

Established in 1977, the three partners of Fiberoptics Technology Inc. began operation in an unheated 10,000 foot warehouse section of a rambling 30,000 foot building, in the small rural town of Pomfret in northeastern Connecticut. Within fifteen years the firm had grown to the extent that not only had it filled all of the 30,000 feet in the existing building, but the partners also wanted to build an additional, separate, 30,000 square foot building. The officials in Pomfret, then with a population of about 2,700, did not want the building to be erected on FTI property, although the firm owned 22 acres of land. After a lengthy struggle, in which many townspeople sided with FTI, permission was granted. With permit in hand, the owners spent considerable effort to locate an architect who had the imagination to take advantage of the site and find a way to make a modern manufacturing building look like a rural barn.

The result was a building which earned the 1993 Master Builder award for a special use building in the large building category. It contains nearly 20 offices, optical fiber drawing equipment, and a large factory floor where fiberoptic assemblies of all kinds are manufactured for industrial, medical, commercial, and military markets. The building is sited, and the land graded, to provide windows on the lower level on the sides not facing the street. Parking is visually subordinated by being set back 150 to 250 feet from the street, which has been planted with canopy shade trees about 60 feet apart. A dense evergreen hedge screens the building's north side (and parking area) from a neighboring residential property.

The architect designed the 175-foot long southern end of this large metal building with a central section featuring a faux barn door and a rendition of the company logo, a gable, and a cupola. This section is flanked by two long wings on either side with slightly lower roof lines. Although landscaped to appear to be at ground level, this section (built into a natural slope, is actually FTI's second floor, providing 25 feet of ceiling height for drawing equipment. This 33,000 square feet building is all metal with a standing seam roof, designed to be as compatible as possible in this historic town. The weathervane on the cupola is a representation of one of the company's earliest and largest selling light guides.

The building is located just under one mile west of the center of town, and is served by a private well and septic system. A small outdoor eating area with picnic tables is provided for employees who can also walk around the grounds during their lunch hour.



**Figure 1:** Aerial view of the property (left) and southern facade of the building, as seen from Quasset Road, traveling north. The less barn like western facade is well-screened by a closely-planted row of white pine evergreen trees planted along the roadside. Views of the parking area are also minimized by site grading and landscape plantings.



**Figure 2:** These two photos show how the large building was fit into the sloping site (courtesy Keith Knowlton).



**Figure 3:** View of the building from the rear. Quasset Road is hidden behind the row of white pine trees on the upper left. (Photo courtesy Keith Knowlton).