BUILDING THE PEACE CENTER: USING HISTORIC SPACES IN NEW WAYS

Elizabeth Peace Stall*

The Greenville of 1985 was dramatically different from the Greenville of only two decades earlier. During those years many textile plants were closed or consolidated, the economic base was shifting to service and high tech businesses, more diverse manufacturing moved into the area, and the Eastside mushroomed with residential and business developments as companies relocated.

Greenville's downtown heart, like that of many others in America, suffered from the flight to the suburbs. Under Mayor Max Heller redevelopment had begun in the heart of the city with the Hyatt complex in the northern axis of the downtown and beautification of Main Street. The area bordering the Reedy River where the city's economic life had developed through the centuries was a seedy mixture of vacant lots, derelict historic buildings, and a few small businesses. Vagrants lived under the bridges and in the boiler room of the Huguenot Mill, pigeons made their home in the historic vacant buildings, a mixture of discarded bathroom fixtures graced the vacant lots, and a train ran through the property, delivering paper to Multimedia and blowing its whistle shrilly each night at 10 o'dook.

Most of the historic buildings bordering the Reedy River shared the suffering, Earlier Camperdown Mill, south of the Main Street bridge, had been torn down. The Sauer Building, also known as the Coach Factory Paint Shop, was condemned by the city and was to be razed. The Coach Factory itself was rapidly deteriorating and its western wall had been rebuilt in an effort to

save it. The area cried for rejuvenation.

With changes in the economy and subsequent growth of the population there was growth in the demands for cultural oppor-

Elizabeth Peace Stall served as president of The Center for the Performing Arts Foundation for the important and formative years of 1986 to 1992. This paper was presented at a meeting of the Greenville County Historical Society on April 17, 1994.

tunities, too. Twenty years earlier there was one theatrical group in town; by 1985 there were at least three. The Greenville Symphony Orchestra had matured from a dedicated amateur group to a respected professional one and had spun off a chamber group and a brass ensemble Numerous other performing groups, dance companies, and a light opera company had been born. Most of these by 1985 were scrambling for performing and rehearsal space, found usually in high school auditoriums or churches.

In 1984 the Greenville Symphony presented a report from its futures committee stating, "The time is at hand for the community to have a center for the performing arts. This facility, centrally located in the city of Greenville, should provide a center for all performing arts groups and at the same time furnish the visible symbol of cultural vitality which will set Greenville apart as it grows into a metropolitan center."

As early as 1977 the Metropolitan Arts Council had begun discussions about the need for such a center and had even brought in a consultant from the fuilliard School to evaluate remodeling Textile Hall. In 1985 the Community Foundation of Greater Greenville accepted a report from Virginia Uldrick, a member of its Grants Committee and Director of the South Carolina Governor's School of the Arts, saying, "To complement a more sophisticated life style and to enhance the mammoth growth of arts activities and the array of performing arts in Greenville it is evident that interests, needs, and the growth of arts activities have far exceeded the performing facilities available." The Community Foundation accepted the report and named the development of a performing from the provinty for Greenville.

The city of Greenville, too, was exploring the possibilities for a performing arts facility. In May 1985 a committee, chaired by Councilman Jimmy Snyder was appointed by Mayor William Workman to investigate the need for such a facility. Many questions would need answers. Was it needed? Would it be used? Would audiences come? What kind of theatre should it house? Where should it be? How could construction be financed? Would it be economically feasible? How should it be operated and by whom? How could shortfalls be covered? What should it look whom? How could shortfalls be covered? What should it look

lie? Where would parking be? What would be the impact on business, on downtown development, on roads and other infrastructure? Only professional planners could help with such complicated issues so the committee recommended that the city hire C. W. Shaver Co., arts planning consultants based in New York with offices in Atlanta. to study the feasibility of such a venture.

In November 1985 after numerous local interviews Ed Allen of the Shaver Company presented their report describing the needs of community arts organizations, probable audience sizes, the type, size and location of performance facilities desired, likely costs for construction and operation, the needs for endowment and the feasibility of funding from a combination of private and lax based resources. Of 29 arts organizations interviewed two said their present performance facilities were ideal, and a whopping 18 claimed theirs inadequate with such comments as, "No fly space, no wings... awful lighting... rehearsal space full of columns... dance floor is terrible... no dressing rooms, no hot water... An acoustically correct stage is needed.. The musicians can't hear each other on stage... no accessibility for the handicapped. Performance equipment is poor.. Seating is very uncomfortable.³

From interviews Shaver estimated that a 1800-2500 seat hall would be booked by local groups, by touring attractions, by dance recitals, and by businesses for meetings for a total of 206 days a year. Local performers indicated that they might use a smaller hall of around 400 seats for a total of 338 days a year

The Shaver Company also felt that adequate audience demand existed because the new facility would be a strong attraction in itself and user groups would be working to develop their own audiences. They noted that ticket prices charged by Greenville arts organizations were among the lowest the company had ever encountered.

From interviews with local performing groups the Shaver Study noted that by far the highest priority for new facilities would be its acoustics, performance space, and equipment. Good sightliness and the comfort of audiences were high on wish list also. Clearly the respondents were saying that factors most affecting the quality of a performance were most important to them.

In its first estimates the Shaver Company calculated that a functional and comfortable facility could be built for a total cost of \$17,25,000 and that an endowment of at least \$4 million would be needed to cover an estimated annual shortfall of \$325,000. They thus projected a total goal of \$21,325,000, a figure quickly proved inadequate by the architectural design team.

While the city was assessing the need for performing facilities, the private sector was working on initial private funding. After the 1985 recapitalization of Multimedia David Freeman persuaded three branches of the Peace family to form private foundations which would hold monies for an arts facility if such a project proved feasible. A public foundation, The Center for the Performing Arts Foundation, was chartered by members of the donors' families and Wyche firm associates. Elizabeth Peace Stall was named president, Etra Ramsaur White secretary, Eric Amstutz, treasurer and David Freeman, advisor. The foundation's first meeting was held on May 9, 1986.

In the meantime the Community Foundation of Greater Greenville upon the recommendation of its grants committee agreed to hold funds committed for a center, to charge no administrative fees for this and to grant \$25,000 for preliminary architectural drawings.

In May 1986 the city of Greenville and the Center for the Performing Arts Foundation agreed to proceed with the development of a performing arts center, and on May 12 the Community Foundation at its annual meeting announced a \$10 million gift with no strings attached from the Dorothy Peace Ramsaur, Dorothy Pedrick Peace and Allen Jordan Graham families in memory of Roger C. Peace, Bony Hampton Peace, Jr., and Frances Peace Graham. It was thought to be the largest single philanthropic gift in the state to that date.

The city hired Land Design Research, an internationally recognized land planning firm from Columbia, Maryland, to recommend a site from a list of many in the downtown area and to develop an action strategy for the ambitious project. Local leaders had initially looked at over twenty downtown sites for the

development and had cited two at the south end of Main Street as having" the greatest potential in terms of serving the needs of the center and at the same time leveraging the center's impact on economic development". The consulting team at LDR after looking at all sites agreed and after evaluating a 4.6 acre plot behind city hall and a 6.3 acre one on the south side of Broad at Main recommended the historic Main and Broad Street location for the Peace Center. The site according to LDR, has "a prominent, highly visible location from upper Main Street. The sloping terrain and the river are both positive factors in the development of this site for the proposed center." In addition, the five historic buildings on the site "put into active and productive use, can only add to the charm and interest of the site as well as enhance the heritage of the larger Reedy River area."5

Five historic buildings sat on the chosen site which was listed in the National Register of Historic places. The 46' by 99' Greenville Coach Factory Blacksmith Shop, owned by the Greenville Historic Foundation, was the oldest. Constructed in 1857 as a blacksmith shop for the Greenville Coach Factory, it is a three and one-half story shed-roofed building constructed with low fired handmade brick bonded with porous lime mortar containing various amounts of local aggregate. Framed with hand hewn timbers, the building was originally constructed with no nails,6 The western wall had been earlier reconstructed using materials different from the original construction.7

The Markley Carriage Factory Paint Shop, also known as the Sauer Building, was then owned by the C. F. Sauer Company of Richmond, Virginia. Built prior to 1915, it is a two-story brick building with a near-flat roof topped by a cupola. Although it had once provided space for painting carriages and later for the manufacture of mayonnaise, it was in such deteriorating condition that it was condemned by the city and slated for demolition.

The building identified as the Markley Hardware Store on South Main Street, a two-story building with a ground-level basement in the rear, was built as a retail hardware store for the Markley Carriage Factory. Renovation on it revealed a two-story sign for Katz Opticians painted on the interior wall, evidently once an exterior advertisement for the business. This led to questions about the authenticity of the building as the real Markley Hardware. The original building was constructed sometime between 1902 and 1908 and burned in 1915. The sign evidently was painted after the fire and before the present building was constructed. Anne McCuen, Chairman of the Greenville County Historic Commission, inspected the current building, researched old court records and newspapers and concluded:" In the spring of 1920 Mr. C. C. Hindman rebuilt the three-story building on the Markley Hardware site apparently using all the basement walls of the original building and adding a new front wall, back wall, and north wall for the second and third floors." A basement window on the north wall is like those of the Markley Hardware shown in old photographs.

In 1882 the Huguenot Mill, built by C. E. Lanneau and C. H. Graham, began as a 40' by 150' two-story brick structure built for the manufacture of plaids, ginghams, and cottonades. Four additions to the building were made in 1888, 1898, 1902, and 1920, according to Felicia Furman Dryden in her study of the site. The mill was bought by Fred W. Symmes in 1910 and modernized by plans drawn by J. E. Sirrine. Manufacturing athletic underware and union suits, it was renamed Nuckasee Manufacturing Company. When purchased by the City for the Peace Center, the building was owned by a New Yorker and housed a sewing operation.

The other building on the site is the Huguenot Mill Office Building built between 1890 and 1900¹¹ and owned by the Historic Greenville Foundation.

After City Council voted to select the site for the performing arts center the city began proceedings to purchase the property from many different owners, to relocate the businesses displaced from the site, and to plan site improvements including river beautification, public spaces, water features, pedestrian and vehicular access, and parking facilities. The city, using tax increment financing spent well over \$6 million on the project.

As the city's commitment grew, so did that of the Foundation. An Executive Committee composed of the original five foundation officers plus Bobbi Wheless, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Arts Council, Jimmy Snyder from the city and Frank Mims, President of the Community Foundation of Greater Greenville was formed and in July 1986 selected the local firm, Craig, Gaulden, and Davis as prime architects for the project. Kirk Craig, principal in that firm, had joined David Freeman in presenting possible plans for a performing arts center to potential donors for many months.

On the advice of C. W. Shaver Co. interviews were held in August 1986 for the selection of an acoustician and a theatrical designer to join the design team. Ron Jerit, a partner of the firm Jerit / Boys of Oak Park, Illinois, convinced the interviewers that he would design a functional facility to fit Greenville's needs. He had designed successful theaters in Nashville, Tennessee; Juneau. Alaska: Boise. Idado and elsewhere.

Larry Kirkegaard, nationally recognized acoustician, was chosen to design acoustical components. Bob Carter was hired by the Center for the Performing Arts Foundation to oversee construction contracts, and Currie Spivey agreed to chair a Building Committee composed of representatives from performing groups, historical authorities, and other interested groups. A. V. Huff and Alex Furman Whitley served on that committee. Mary Hunter Sloan Shoemaker chaired an aesthetics committee, which worked with architects in choosing colors and materials for the buildings. A minority interest committee was also convened to assure the awarding of contracts to minority businesses. They met weekly for months determining the scope of work needed and identifying firms capable of handling the sub-contracts. The city hired Land Design Research to draw site plans.

On September 6, 1986 the design team, now including a cost consultant, planned a charrette to determine what local performers wanted and would use in a facility. Seventeen local performing groups met individually with the design team and Foundation members to explore technical needs of performers, desired seating capacities and estimated use of the center. After two days of deliberation the decision to construct two multipurpose halls, if possible financially, was reaffirmed and staggering cost figures were presented. Including fees and interest expenses, \$31

million was estimated for constructing an average quality complex. Discouraged, the Board was forced to begin cutting costs but did not stop planning.

The design team and foundation members traveled to Nashville, Tennessee and St. Paul, Minnesola to see the Tennessee Performing Arts Center and the Ordway Theatre and to discuss buildings and operating procedures with successful centers. After careful deliberation the Foundation Board authorized Craig. Gaulden and Davis to develop schematic plans for two buildings, a 2000+ seat multi-purpose hall and a 400+ seat playhouse to be united with existing historic buildings which would provide backstage spaces.

A larger governing organization to oversee construction, to present the project to the community, and to raise additional construction and endowment funds was necessary. In January 1987 a fifteen-member Board of Trustees with three advisors from the city met for the first time. Mamie Jolley Bruce, Francis Hipp, Nancy Maddrey, Minor Mickel, Thomas Roe, Tom Ryan of Michelin, Ann (Tunky) Riley, and Wilson Wearn had been added to the seven-member core group. In addition, Fred Walker, newly retired President of Henderson Advertising, agreed to chair a fund raising drive and became a member of the Board. James Greer from the city's development office and Councilmen Jimmy Snyder and Knox White met with the Foundation Board to coordinate plans with the city.

An Advisory Committee, chaired by Francis Hipp, also began to meet to hear about the proposed plans and to offer suggestions.

As plans for construction were being developed, fund raising activities intensified. The center's first employee, Becky Garnett, was hired as administrative assistant in March 1987 and with her help Fred Walker began to develop prospective donor lists and promotional brochures. The campaign theme, "Play Your Part", created by Henderson Advertising, appeared on automobile bumpers around town. Leaders of the Board sought support from major donors and began corporate and individual campaigns. All Milano of C. W. Shaver Co. arrived in September 1987

to coordinate fund raising activities for six months.

In the meantime the Greenville County legislative delegation was approached about possible state funding. Senator Verne Smith, member of the Senate Finance Committee, and Representatives Jimmy Mattos and Dill Blackwell of the House Ways and Means Committee were appointed by David Wilkins, vice chairman of the delegation, to work with the Foundation in seeking state funds. After almost \$20 million had been raised from the private sector, Foundation officers asked the Budget and Control Board and Governor Carroll Campbell to provide \$6 million in state bond funding for the project. South Carolina had never given construction funds for a project that was not owned by a state agency, but with the challenge of the extraordinary private funding they agreed to the request, using the city as the funding recipient. The state also insisted on support from county government which, after the request was made, approved a \$15,000 annual appropriation from accommodations tax monies over a fifteen year period.

In addition to the initial Peace family gift, Dorothy Hipp Gunter pledged \$3 million for the small theatre and Multimedia, Inc. and Kirohito/TNS Mills gave \$1 million or over. One million dollars was pledged by Thomas A. and Shirley Roe for the renovation of the historic Coach Factory, and \$3.6 million from three other branches of the Peace family, the descendants of Charlie Peace - Mary Peace Sterling and Peace Sterling Sullivan, of Gertrude Peace Leake – Genevieve Leake Sakas and Marian Leake Harris, and of Laura Peace Echols – Laura Echols duPont and Suzanne Echols Fludson. A Wall of Honor was erected in the lobby of the Peace Concert Hall to recognize the many individuals, businesses and public bodies who gave over \$25,000 each to form the public/Private partnership that made the center a reality.

A campaign to name seats grossed over \$600,000, and school children in the county raised money to buy a concert grand piano for the concert hall through an "88 Keys" campaign in 1988.

Schematic drawings for the theatres were presented in April 1987, and the Board then authorized the design team to proceed with construction drawings. In September 1987 construction de-

sign drawings were presented, and the Board authorized work on detailed construction documents.

As drawn and built, the 2100 seat concert hall features an orchestra level of 1000 seats, 12 dramatic boxes and two balconies. In the glass faced lobby there are restrooms on three levels. a four-windowed box office, coatrooms and support areas. The 40 by 100 foot stage is only 100 feet from the most distant seat. An orchestra lift can accommodate musicians in a pit and move up, as well, to seat audience or enlarge the stage. The 100 foot high fly space can accomodate any sets designed today. The orchestra shell fits into a specially designed storage pocket at the rear of the stage. A loading dock on Broad Street accommodates tractor trailers from which sets can be off loaded directly into a large sub-assembly shop. Behind the stage on the south side of the building a rehearsal hall was designed the same size as the stage with barres, mirrors and a sprung floor for dancers, and a catering kitchen for parties and meetings. In the east wing of the Huguenot Mill, which was united with the new concert hall, a green room, a star dressing room, other dressing rooms, a wardrobe room with washing machines and dryers, bathrooms and offices are housed. Below these on the first floor of the mill the Peace Center offices were fit into the old building. Original floors and exposed brick were left wherever possible.

The challenge of wedding a huge new theatre with a 19thcentury manufacturing building was addressed on the exterior by breaking up the brick expanse with set backs and patterning.

The 400-seat playhouse, posthumously named the Dorothy Gunter Theatre, houses similar spaces on a smaller scale. The exterior of the concert hall is angular and its audience chamber drum shaped, whereas the Gunter Playhouse was drawn as a complement with its curved glass front and an angular audience chamber thrust into the lobby. Its audience chamber is less formal and more playful with acting spaces above side doors. Support space for the Gunter Theatre was carved out of the interior of the Markley Hardware Building.

The remaining space in the Markley Hardware Building has been readapted as office space for Workspaces, a locally-owned office supplier, and for DMB & B, an advertising firm.

Feeling that wherever possible the construction and operation of the Peace Center should benefit up state residents and businesses, the Foundation hired Fluor/ Daniel Construction Co. to manage construction of the complex and instructed them, whenever possible, to award contracts to local sub-contractors, including minority builders. Bob Albright was named by Fluor/Daniel to be construction manager. Plans were let for bids and contracts warded.

In September 1986 an earth-shaking, noise-making ground breaking was planned by Fred Walker and Susan Hendricks Redmond. The Greenville Symphony Orchestra wearing hard hats played a pops program and led the audience in a kazoo chonus, Mayor Bill Workman announced that the center would be named the Peace Center for the Performing Arts, and representatives of the city, county, state, and foundation pushed a plunger setting off a dynamite blast to begin construction.

The site offered challenges for building. A35-foot drop from the corner of Main and Broad Streets to the river had to be considered in design and an underlying layer of granite necessitated some blasting. The new buildings themselves united to historic old structures had to be not only sympathetic in scale but also compatible in materials. There were at least six different brick colors in the five historic structures on the site so there was no way to match new brick to all of them. The oversized brick see lected was chosen to blend. Because of limited funds materials for the buildings had to be reasonably priced and as simple as possible to assemble. Brick, split-faced concrete block, stained wood, and simple fixtures were chosen. Cost cuts were made mostly in the backstage areas. The size of the site dictated the size of the lobbjes in both theatres.

The first six months of construction, it seemed, were spent below ground. Huge air moving conduits (their size dictated by acoustical considerations), orchestra lift areas, stanchions tying the new structures to bed rock, water and utility lines were dug into the site. In June 1989 steel began to rise and rise and rise.

As designed, both theatres provide full handicap access and

space in the audience chambers for wheel chairs. An infrared system for the hearing impaired is available in both halls. There is an elevator in the concert hall and room for a second one.

Construction on the Peace Concert Hall and the Dorothy Gunter Theatre was almost complete for the scheduled grand opening events, chaired by Lillian Webb Parr and Musette Williams Stern of the Junior League. Both theatres were dedicated in free public performances on Sunday, November 25, 1990, and a grand opening featuring performers with local roots drew audiences for three performances Nov. 30 and Dec. 1 and 2.

The other historic buildings have also been readapted for use in the Peace Center complex. The Center for the Performing Arts Foundation purchased the Markley Coach Factory from the Historic Greenville Foundation, engaged George T. Fore and Associates of Raleigh, North Carolina, historic building preservation experts, to make recommendations for its preservation, and invested over \$1 million to readapt the building for use as a cafe and meeting rooms. Craig, Gaulden and Davis designed the interiors of the building and Morris Construction performed the work. Precise formulas for the restoration of mortar and brick work and great care in respecting the historic construction of the building have captured its historic charm.

The Markley Carriage Factory Paint Shop was also purchased by the Center for the Performing Arts Foundation. The city was persuaded not to demolish it. Constructed in the flood plain and atop a major sewer line, it was restored as an open air pavilion dedicated to Harriet Smith and C. Thomas Wyche with funds given by Minor H. and Buck Mickel.

The remaining wings of the Huguenot Mill have been restored with a one million dollar gift from Mr. and Mrs. Allen J. Graham, the grandson of C. H. Graham, the original builder. Clerestory windows have been replaced, the bricked-up windows reopened, interior wood and brick cleaned and a spacious lobby looking up into the mill tower created. Enwright Associates, who designed the building's re-adaptation, occupies the light flooded top floor, and Raymond James and Associates, Inc., a brokerage firm, has leased the Broad Street level. Clifford F. Gaddy, attor

ney, is leasing a small space in the lobby area. In its 1993 form the mill is somewhat smaller because a fire road into the property dictated the shortening of the two wings and the removal of the 1902 addition.

The city of Greenville has been responsible for site development and maintenance. They have created a park on the river in the heart of downtown, have negotiated the removal of the Seaboard Coastline Railroad from the site, have dammed the Reedy creating a small pond and waterfall, have constructed an amphitheatre, and with the financial support of the Greenville Water Works built a water-feature in front of the complex and a waterfall between the two theatres

In January 1988 after a national search the Center for the Performing Arts Foundation employed Dr. Jack Cohan, Executive Director of the Jorgenson Center at the University of Connecticut, as Executive Director of the Peace Center. A native of Canada, he holds a Doctor of Music degree in Piano Performance from Indiana University and was president of regional and national organizations of performing arts presenters. A twenty-four

member staff operates the theatres and ancillary spaces.

The impact of the center on Greenville and the Upstate has been great. Additional development is occurring close to the site, incoming industry has stated that the presence of the center is a drawing card for relocation, and the cultural scene has never had as many offerings.

In its initial campaign the Peace Center raised \$42 million in contributions and pledges from private and city, county and state coffers. However, many of those pledges stretched over many years or were made as bequests. The Center has raised additional monies in an endowment campaign, monies which hopefully will permit full operation of the center indefinitely. In fiscal year 1992, 85,000 patrons bought tickets to productions at the center and in 1993-94 35,000 school children from seven upstate counties attended special performances in the POP! educational program.

The Peace Center was envisioned by its founders as a cultural resource for the region, a catalyst for redevelopment, a restoration of Greenville's historic river area, an attraction to relocating industries, an enrichment for the people of the Piedmont, a vitalizing base for performing groups, and an educational enrichment for students. Its first three years of operation have brought much of that dream to life.

Endnotes

¹ Greenville Symphony Orchestra, Report of Futures Committee, 1984.

² Virginia Uldrick, Recommendation to Grants Committee of Commu-

nity Foundation of Greater Greenville, 1985.

³ C. W. Shaver Co., Inc., Report of a Study for Greenville, SC Metropolitan Arts Council with Regard to a Proposed New Performing Arts Center, Jan. 1986.

⁵ Land Design Research, Inc., Greenville Center for the Performing Arts Assessment and Action Strategy, Apr. 10, 1986.

⁶National Register of Historic Places Inventory, Nomination Form, Feb. 14, 1979.

⁷ George T. Fore, The Carriage Factory Masonry Conditions Analysis, June 1990.

8 Anne McCuen, letter to Betty Stall, June 11, 1991.

Felicia Furman Dryden, Guidelines for the Preservation of the Reedy River Commercial and Industrial District, p. 22.

11 Ibid., p. 23. 11 Ibid., p. 23.

Bibliography

Dryden, Felicia Furman, Guidelines for the Preservation of the Reedy River Commercial and Industrial District, New York: Columbia University, 1979.

Fore, George T., The Carriage Factory Masonry Conditions Analysis, Raleigh, N. C., June 1990

Greenville Symphony Orchestra, Study of Futures Committee, 1984.

Land/Design Research, Inc., Greenville Center for the Performing Arts Site Assessment and Action Strategy, Columbia, Md., April 10, 1986. McCuen, Anne, letter to Betty Stall, June 11, 1991.

National Register of Historic Places, Nomination Form, Feb. 14, 1979.

C. W. Shaver Co., Inc., Report of a Study for the Greenville, South Carolina Metropolitan Arts Council with Regard to a Proposed New Performing Arts Center, New York, Jan. 1986.

Stall, Elizabeth Peace, Documents from Peace Center files, 1985-1993.

Uldrick, Virginia, Proposal to Grants Committee of Community Foundation of Greater Greenville. 1985.