

## PERRY L. BUTCHER & ASSOCIATES, ARCHITECTS (PBA)

Perry L. Butcher & Associates, Architects, has become one of the oldest and largest architectural firms in Arkansas. From humble beginnings, two goal-oriented young architects founded Wilbur and Butcher Architects in June 1963 in a small office in downtown Rogers.

Paul Wilbur and Perry Butcher's friendship, which grew into a partnership, began during their completion of the five-year architectural school program at Oklahoma State University—both graduating in 1959. Interning with Stowers and Boyce of Little Rock, they became licensed architects four years later.

Initial plans were to open a firm in Enid, Oklahoma. However, at that time a major firm from Oklahoma City had set up an office in Enid. Paul and Perry had to reconsider their plan, realizing that Enid may become too competitive for an inexperienced firm. They began researching and comparing Oklahoma, Kansas and Arkansas, finding that Arkansas had the fewest architects per capita. Other incentives for establishing their business in Arkansas began three years prior, when Paul lived in Rogers while managing the Northwest Arkansas branch office of Stowers and

*Rogers Public Library, Rogers, Arkansas.*



*Springdale City Administration Building, Springdale, Arkansas.*

Boyce. He had become well acquainted with the school systems, chamber of commerce, and city administrators—establishing the connections needed to pursue a new business. Due to the growth Rogers and the entire Northwest Arkansas area was experiencing the two gentlemen felt this city was the choice place to practice architecture and a good area to raise their families.

In the fall of 1963 PBA was awarded three major school project contracts. With these projects PBA developed a reputation for producing drawings that were detailed, accurate, and complete. Residential projects also became an important part of its work.

Wilbur and Butcher's first office was located in a small upstairs space over Freda Marie's dress shop, at 111 West Walnut Street in downtown Rogers. This space was in front of the commercial advertising agency, Gurley and Associates. A secretary was employed,

plus the two principals, and a draftsman was added by the end of the first year. At that time payroll was approximately \$450 a month excluding the architect's salaries. As business increased and additional room was needed, the company rented another small space across the street above the Tom and Jerry's shoe store. The secretary remained at the office over the dress shop and the principals moved across the street. They could watch clients enter the original office from where they were situated and would run across the street for meetings.

Harold Wardlow, owner of Strouds Department Store, watched Paul and Perry run back and forth across the street and suggested they rent the large area over his store before one of them was struck by a car. Wilbur and Butcher Architects accepted Wardlow's offer and relocated.

In 1967 Mack Ferguson, another graduate of Oklahoma State University became a partner of PBA and opened a branch office in Little Rock, Arkansas. The name was changed to Wilbur, Butcher, and Ferguson. Mack was involved in designing church buildings



Left: *Perry Butcher's most recent office addition. Rogers, Arkansas.*

Below: *E.A. Pfeffer House, Rogers, Arkansas.*

and the company started to receive these jobs throughout central and northern Arkansas. Mack left PBA in 1971 to open a private practice.

During the early 1970s PBA was awarded the Gravette City Hospital contract. In 1972 Paul made the decision to leave the partnership and pursue his medical education. Upon Paul's graduation he set up practice in Mountain Home, Arkansas. Wilbur and Butcher Architects changed its name to Perry L. Butcher, Architect.

In 1972 John Mack, intern architect, joined PBA. John graduated from the University of Arkansas in 1973, became a full-time employee in 1974 and was licensed in 1976. With his internship and military service behind him, John returned to PBA and assisted Perry with design and client relationships. John became chief designer and in 1984 was made a partner. PBA's name was once again changed to Perry L. Butcher & Associates, Architects, (PBA).

In 1983 PBA opened a small branch office in Woodward, Oklahoma, Perry's hometown. Also during the early 1980s, PBA began developing a relationship with Wal-Mart, which led them to acquire additional regional and national accounts. PBA's increased experience with nationwide code require-



ments coupled with their multi-state licensing became an asset in servicing other clients seeking to locate in multiple states. One particular client, Newlywed's Foods headquartered in Chicago, contracted with PBA to design their Springdale, Arkansas, facility. That led to Newlywed's Foods' projects in the Midwest and China. In 1988, due to the decline in the Oklahoma oil industry and the impact that decline had on the state's growth, the office in Woodward was closed.

As the volume of projects increased it became necessary to develop a more efficient means of production. Stan-

dardization of details and construction documents, assisting clients to produce more complete prototypes and the client/architect as a team mentality was instituted. Steve Butcher, who joined PBA in 1986, was instrumental in implementing these concepts; he also developed more efficient personnel management and creating departments with specialized abilities.

In 1990 PBA opened an office in Fayetteville, Arkansas, answering Perry's long overdue dream. Instantaneously several projects were released to PBA.

Perry knew a presence in international projects would be important to the



*Shanghai Music Observatory, Shanghai, The People's Republic of China.*

firm's continued growth. Contacts have, and continue to be, developed in Mexico, China, Yugoslavia and Canada.

The Wal-Mart/PBA relationship began in the early 1970s. Sam and Bud Walton would personally visit Perry's office to discuss the development of Sam's first store concepts, plans and drawings. The number of Wal-Mart projects awarded to PBA continues to grow today—attributed to PBA's ability to produce excellent work in a timely fashion and its 24/7 availability to clients. In 1991 PBA was presented the Award for Excellence in Quality, Accuracy, and Hard Work by Wal-Mart. Perry and Sam's personal relationship was demonstrated during an early Saturday morning meeting at Wal-Mart

headquarters when Sam Walton made the comment, "I knew Perry back when he had hair!"

Throughout the years PBA has been active in fundraising, community service, and the local and area chambers of commerce. This commitment continues today and is evidenced by PBA's ongoing involvement with the United Way, recycling drives, litter pickup, the community Christmas parade, the annual Roger's Frisco Festival and participation in programs to assist area residents. In addition, PBA is proud to sponsor an Olympic hopeful and award scholarships to students attending post-secondary schools. PBA staff members visit classrooms

offering tutoring and mentoring skills and participate in student career shadowing programs. The company has volunteered its design and labor services to such projects as the Ozark Natural Science Center, Rogers Bike & Skate Park and Habitat for Humanity. PBA is on the Board of Directors of Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), which is a college-level organization sponsored by approximately 200 corporations in the United States. PBA submitted designs for the Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial as well as a competition for a mixed-use

project in San Diego. Perry Butcher has assisted professionals from China and Yugoslavia who desire to live, work, and bring their families to the United States to become citizens.

As Rogers has grown so has PBA. In 1995 through 1996 it employed 60 people. Today there are over 180 employees. PBA services have been used throughout the state in the planning and designing of public schools, private residences, places of worship, libraries, office buildings and complexes, restaurants, banks, theaters, clinics and hospitals, colleges and universities, the restoration of historic sites and adaptive reuse of existing buildings—all worked with care to preserve the site surroundings. PBA has been part of downtown Rogers since the firm's inception and has played an important part in keeping the vitality and beauty of the area. Today PBA's corporate headquarters is still located in downtown Rogers, but now housed in its own 40,000-square-foot building. Over the years PBA has opened and maintains offices in Arlington, Texas; Windsor, Connecticut; Los Angeles, California; and Shanghai, China.

The opportunity to work with Wal-

*Walker Hall, University of the Ozarks, Clarksville, Arkansas.*



Mart helped PBA gain nationwide recognition and enabled expansion into other areas of the country, well beyond Perry's early plans for growth within Northwest Arkansas. PBA is licensed and has completed projects in all 50 states, Washington, D.C.; Puerto Rico; and the People's Republic of China. Currently, PBA is pursuing projects in the Bahamas, Mexico and South Africa. PBA utilizes the very latest in communication technologies to remain competitive in today's market. PBA's national clients include: Wal-Mart; Sam's Clubs; Lowe's Home Improvement Centers; Kinko's; McDonald's; and Newlywed's Foods.

Perry Butcher & Associates, Architects, has received numerous awards from Wal-Mart for excellence in the quality and accuracy of their work. In 1995 PBA was awarded the Arkansas Chapter of the American Institute of Architects Award of Excellence for the Springdale City Administration Complex. That same year PBA was awarded the Arkansas Chapter of the American

Institute of Architects Meritorious and Humanitarian Award. In 2000 PBA was awarded the Arkansas Chapter of the American Institute of Architects Merit Award for restoration of the William Wilson House in Prairie Grove. In 1999 and 2000 PBA was a finalist for the Northwest Arkansas Business of the Year. They have received the Association of Builder's and Contractor's President's Award for Excellence in Construction for the University of Arkansas' Baum Baseball Stadium. PBA was awarded the Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas' Excellence in Preservation Through Rehabilitation for the restoration of the Victory Theater in Rogers in 2001.

Today the firm has four principals: Mr. Perry L. Butcher, A.I.A., NCARB, founder of PBA; Mr. John T. Mack, A.I.A., NCARB, design principal; Mr. Steve Butcher, principal in charge of national accounts; and Mr. Doug Hurley, A.I.A., NCARB, principal in charge of production for national projects.

PBA employs seven architects includ-

ing an international architect; an international engineer; a mechanical engineer, an electrical engineer and a civil engineer. Additionally PBA employs intern architects, project managers, AutoCAD® technicians, a construction administrator and an interior designer. PBA maintains marketing, permitting, accounting, administrative and shipping departments.

For 40 years Mr. Butcher has provided an environment that promotes good will, superior communications and opportunities for his staff and clients. It is Mr. Butcher's wish that everyone involved with Perry Butcher & Associates, Architects become a part of his family and continue to grow and prosper with him. When asked his secret to success Perry answers, "Always pursue opportunity."

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*Shelter Mutual Insurance, Springdale, Arkansas.*

