

Matthew J. Perry Jr.  
United States  
Courthouse  
Columbia, SC

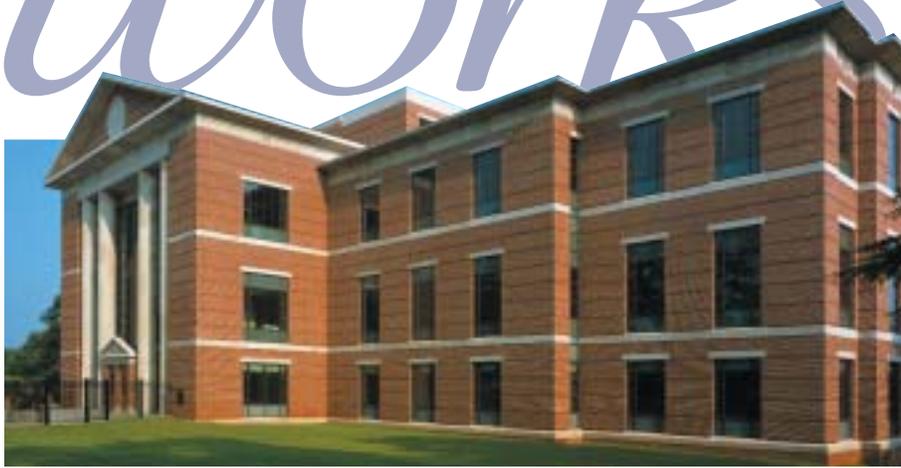
Architect:  
Stevens & Wilkinson  
of SC, Inc.  
Columbia, SC

General Contractor:  
Caddell Construction  
Company  
Montgomery, AL

Masonry Contractor:  
Al Masonry  
Winnsboro, SC

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**New Courthouse  
Blends 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
Functionality with  
19<sup>th</sup> Century Design**

The state capitol of South Carolina is the nation's second planned city. Located within a few blocks of each other in downtown Columbia is a cluster of historic buildings. Many bear the design of famed 19th century architect Robert Mills, who also designed the Washington Memorial in Washington, D.C. Columbia needed a new, 186,000-square-foot U.S. Courthouse adjacent to the existing Strom Thurmond Federal Complex and the Governor's Mansion that would be functional and modern, yet still honor the traditional style of the surrounding structures.

“By using brick, we gained the flexibility of form and shape while providing a very durable exterior at a reasonable cost.”

Wayne Redfern, AIA, Stevens & Wilkinson of SC, Inc.





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“It was essential that the design depict the stature and reverence of the court without overwhelming nearby buildings,” says Wayne Redfern, project manager with Stevens & Wilkinson of SC. “Therefore, we chose a Robert Mills vernacular to create a building that would fit well into the cityscape.”

Because the courthouse is set in a 3.7-acre pastoral site, its height was held to a minimum to achieve a context between the Strom Thurmond Federal Complex and the adjacent low-rise building. The main façade fronts Richland Street, which helps promote the ceremonial access to the Governor’s Green.

“Brick was an obvious choice for the exterior,” says Redfern. “It evokes a sense of history and permanence, while giving the building a feeling of warmth. Its modular size helps break down the mass of what is a very large building into

a more human scale.” Modular brick with limestone accents create the building’s façade. Special-shaped brick was used sparingly: water table and canted cap pieces are used at the fence and wall that surround the building’s perimeter.

Limestone, glass and granite pavers are used at the entrance to create a grand and formal entry point for visitors. Limestone accents, such as cornices, columns and pediments, and window heads and sills were used to accentuate the openings. Limestone horizontal banding highlights the recessed brick bands that are used to break the vertical scale of the building.

“The three-story entry element is used as a strong and elegant ordering device,” says Redfern. “They follow the extraordinary custom wrought iron gates designed and built by Phillip Simmons, who truly is a modern master

craftsman.” The artful blending of materials and classical design elements ensures that brick is the star of the show.

Almost a decade in the making, the Matthew J. Perry Jr. United States Courthouse is a triumph in combining modern construction with the grand design that characterizes the municipal district of Columbia. It earned a Merit Award from the Columbia chapter of the AIA, and has received compliments from clients, visitors, and the architectural community.

“This project was a true team effort,” says Redfern “The collaboration between associate architects Shepley, Bullfinch & Abbott of Boston, along with project architect Richard Ladson, AIA and project manager Steven Sommer, GSA, ensured the courthouse embodies the vision the city, the Courts, and GSA had in mind.”

## THE DETAIL FILE

Take a closer look at how the Architect detailed this section.

Of course, this depiction is not to be construed as an exact detailing recommendation by the Brick Association of the Carolinas.

