

CHARLES WITSELL, JR., FAIA

Over his career, as an architect, Charles Witsell has pursued his interest in historic preservation with a passion, giving freely of his time and talents to various professional, community and religious organizations. He is an author and a noted public speaker; he has also taught classes on the subject of historic Arkansas architecture at the University of Arkansas and at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. His lifetime of experience and knowledge of historic structures in Arkansas has made him a very significant resource to those who are seeking information and guidance in the field of preservation in our state.

Mr. Witsell has also been an accomplished practitioner, working on over 200 National Register buildings and dozens of others in his career. In new construction, Mr. Witsell is experienced in many building types, reflecting forty years of commitment to his profession. The majority of his design and design management of new construction are in ecclesiastical, educational, governmental and residential structures.

Charles Witsell, Jr, FAIA was born on June 10, 1944. He attended Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri where he obtained a Bachelor of Science in Architecture in 1966 and where also he obtained a Master of Architecture in 1968.

Upon graduation, Charles returned to Little Rock and went to work for the Cromwell Firm where he was able to work with and for his mentor, Ed Cromwell. In 1973 he became a registered architect in Arkansas and he remained at the firm until 1978. In 1978 Witsell joined Don Evans to form Witsell and Evans Architects/Planners to take advantage of the popular new tax credits for historic preservation and restoration. Witsell has served as senior principal of the firm, which became Witsell, Evans, Rasco (WER) in 1984, since its founding.

During his tenure as president, the firm has grown and prospered winning dozens of awards along the way. A 21-person firm located in Little Rock the WER partnership is noted for its tradition of architectural excellence and for its commitment to cultural, academic and scientific institutions, as well as its celebrated achievements in historic preservation.

Mr. Witsell's passion for preservation is evident in the numerous leadership roles that he has held in the past and in the ones he continues to hold today. He has served on the Board of Advisors of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, The Arkansas Commemorative Commission, which is responsible for the Old State house and Trapnall Hall, and he is currently Vice Chair of the Historic Arkansas Museum. He has previously served on the boards of the Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas, the Quapaw Quarter Association, and the Governor's Mansion Association. He was vice-chair of the Little Rock Historic District Commission and served on the Mayor's Task Force on Historic preservation.

For his efforts, he has been awarded the Jimmy Strawn Award by the Quapaw Quarter Association, the McGimsey Award for contribution to Arkansas

Archaeology, the Ledbetter Award for Books on Arkansas, The Westbrook Award by the Preservation Alliance, and with his wife Becky, they were the honorees for the establishment of an endowment for the establishment of scholarships for preservation education.

Mr. Witsell has received two American Institute of Architects (AIA) commendations, he is a former director of the Arkansas chapter of the AIA and he was named a Fellow by the AIA in 1987 for his significant contribution to architecture. Additionally, he has co-authored one book, written thirty-seven articles, delivered over 100 lectures and he is in the early stages of another book on Arkansas architecture.

His works can be found from Lake Village to Fayetteville and Texarkana to Jonesboro featuring such preservation projects as the Old State House, the Confederate State Capitol in Hempstead County, the Hempstead County 1874 Courthouse, a number of projects with the current Arkansas State Capitol and numerous residences and other building types. In the area of new construction he played a significant role on the Richard Sheppard Arnold United States Courthouse addition and remodeling, the Episcopal Collegiate School in Little Rock, the First United Methodist Church in Texarkana and new Episcopal churches in Conway, Jacksonville, Russellville and Little Rock. Additionally, he played a significant role on buildings on seven college campuses in Arkansas among numerous other projects.

When one surveys the life of Charles Witsell, Jr. it becomes quite obvious that his career has not been a job, but it has been a passion. It is also quite obvious that this passion has benefited all Arkansans greatly, whether they realize it or not.