

COLISEUM GLITTERS AGAIN AS MULTIPURPOSE ARENA

CONTRACTORS RAISED THE ROOF TO GET THE JOB DONE



Greensboro War Memorial Coliseum, North Carolina

For years North Carolina's Greensboro War Memorial Coliseum was the gem of the Carolinas for multipurpose arenas, but by the mid 1980s, newer, more modern facilities had sprung up all around it. "It didn't take long for the business to slip right out the door," said Coliseum General Manager James Evans.

Meanwhile, the Greensboro citizenry became extremely choosy

about renovation proposals. Two bond referendums failed before voters finally approved a \$45.7 million expansion project in 1990 that would add 7,000 new seats, double the size of the adjoining Special Events Center and bring the whole facility into the nineties.

To pull off this transformation, the city of Greensboro chose Huber, Hunt & Nichols Inc., a general contractor with a solid record for sports

facility construction. The Indianapolis-based firm then called on Roser Fabrap International to handle the design.

UPDATING WITH BRICK

"Our first objective was to capitalize on as much of the existing structure as possible, so we built a doughnut around the old building," said Rosser Fabrap architect John Wyle, AIA. In order to make the whole facility look new and appear as if it had been constructed at the same time, brick was recommended. "Brick served as the original building material and it also gave us just the versatility we needed for such a complex project," Wyle said.

Boren Brick of Greensboro supplied the 940,000 bricks (Colonial Modular) mined from North Carolina clay and shale. According to Boren's Mose Riser, the company provided almost 2 million bricks for the original building in 1959 and a subsequent expansion 10 years later.

The new brick matches perfectly with the old, and the two blend together to form the walls of the new concourse. For the exterior, a common running bond with a Flemish header every six course was selected. Rowlock sailors, combined with single and double soldier courses, provided the accent.

A STRUCTURAL BRAINSTORM

To stay within budget and ensure the very top rows of seats wouldn't

face a forest of girders and catwalks, structural engineer Bob Kennerly of Sutton Kennerly & Associates came up with a daring idea: Remove the old roof and re-use it for the new Special Events Center, then raise the Coliseum roof 40 feet.

Although the idea seemed simple, the execution wasn't. Eight 25 feet by 200 feet trusses were hoisted, checked for defects, then placed in storage until it was time for the Special Events Center roof to be raised.

As a result, the Coliseum allows superior viewing from every seat, gives the exhibit hall 80,000 square feet of column-free space, and makes the whole complex versatile enough to host everything from concerts to track meets to conventions.

OPEN AND FESTIVE

While the old Coliseum seemed a rather closed and claustrophobic structure plagued by poor circulation patterns for large crowds, the new facility is much more open and spacious. "We wanted to turn the concourse into an open and festive area where spectators from the upper and lower sections could move freely back and forth," Wyle said.

Besides a wider aisle, the new concourse has a ceiling that soars 40 feet overhead. A dozen bridges move traffic between decks, each with balconies that provide ample space for viewing.

Here, brick was important for its color and warmth to achieve the overall design effect. Panels of glass up to 4 feet by 10 feet in size were used in careful proportion to the brick. Above the masonry work and glass, lightweight EIFS panels were installed.

The new Coliseum, which now seats 23,218, puts Greensboro back in business as a serious contender for almost any kind of event. "Because we have several kinds of buildings on a single site, we've actually carved our own unique niche," said Evans. Already the prestigious Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament has been lured back to Greensboro, beginning in 1995. □