

Architects shaping look of county

By **ROBERTA FUGATE**
Herald Staff Writer

NEWTON — You don't have to look very far to find a building designed by the Houghton Quarry Warr Architects firm. A stone's throw away in any direction and you're bound to hit something this team of architects has designed in Sussex County.

The firm has been in business for more than 35 years, and has played an integral part in designing or redesigning some of the most familiar buildings in the county and surrounding area, including Cochran Plaza, Blair Academy and Pope John Regional High School.

"Sussex County has been our home, we live here and our work is here," said Frank Warr, a founding partner. Warr, along with partners William Houghton and N. Stewart Quarry, attended Syracuse University together and started the architect firm after graduation in 1971. Today the firm employs 10 architects.

Some of the biggest changes Warr has seen since the firm opened have to do with technology. Architecture has gone from T-squares and pencils to computer design, the Internet and ftp sites that now allow clients and architects, along with construction, electrical and other consultants to remain in close contact throughout the design and completion of a project, Warr said. "In the past we had to draw the plans, get them copied and mail them. When Federal Express came around, that was new technology," he said.

As much as modern technology plays a role in present-day architecture, it is important to remember the past. "Civilization is really measured by its architecture, it is a timeline really," Warr said.

"It is cutting edge but at the same time reflective of the past," said Sergio Chavarria, a partner in the firm.

Chavarria said he enjoys architecture and working with clients to create new ideas. "Our job is to take the ideas from clients we come upon and put those ideas into a structure. The client is the catalyst for what we do."

Warr echoed that thought and described the firm's projects as children where "conception" begins with the design. The firm is there every step of the way, through the infancy of schematics, design and development as their guidance continues through childhood, which includes construction and documentation, and more construction until there is a complete three-dimensional space that is finished and occupied by the owner.



Photo by Roberta Fugate/NJH

Steve Skorski, project architect for HQW Architects, LLC, goes over some new plans in his office at 124 Main St. in Newton. HQW Architects has been in business for more than 35 years.

However, once the project is complete, Warr said with a laugh, "it's unusual because you're there, as close as a man can get to giving birth, and then you can't get in (to the building) without a badge. It truly is like saying good-bye to one of your children." But like any proud parent, it gives him a great sense of pride when the finished project is a blend of form and function that makes the firm and client happy.

Developing a good relationship and making sure clients are satisfied with the end result is an integral part of the business. "It is important to create a relationship with clients where they receive accurate honest information that is current. It is important to form a relationship of mutual respect or it just won't work," Warr said. Warr and his colleagues said they research their clients to assess their needs before a project begins because "the clients have to get a return on their

investment. That's one of the important things about our job, is to make sure that happens," he said.

Even with all the research, sometimes it isn't clear what a client has in mind. "St. Clare's Hospital is a good example of a client who wasn't really sure what they wanted the end result to be. It had to be somewhere that made patients feel comfortable during a stressful time, but also be state of the art," said project architect Steve Skorski. In the end, the architects and the client conceived and executed a design that solved both issues.

Sometimes the challenge isn't the concept, but rather the execution of the design. There are times when it has to be "business as usual" while the building or renovation project is in progress. A perfect example, Warr said, was during an addition to The New Jersey Herald build-

See **FIRM**, Back Page