

STROLL *THROUGH* HISTORY

WOODLAND, CALIFORNIA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STROLL THROUGH HISTORY FEATURES PORTER BUILDING RESTORATION
511 MAIN STREET
Constructed: 1913

EARLY HISTORY

Placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, The Porter building was designed in 1913 by noted architect William Henry Weeks, the same architect who designed the County Courthouse, the Elks Lodge Building, the Woodland High School on College Street, Yolo County Jail, Woodland Primary School at 175 N. Walnut, Woodland Grammar School on Elm Street, the west wing of the Woodland Library, Yolo Fliers Clubhouse, Yolo County Hospital, and Hotel Woodland.

The Porter Building, built in the Renaissance Revival style, is crafted of buff-colored thin Roman brick with matte glaze terra cotta architectural details and prismatic glass transom windows. The windows are divided by pilasters. The cornice is particularly decorative with its dentil course, brackets and garlands. An elaborate arched entrance leads to the front lobby. Woodland's first electric elevator (still in working order), telephone service to all offices, as well as steam heat for offices and hallways were all major innovations for that time. The Porter Building sits on a cement foundation further enhancing its stability.

Upon entering the building, you will walk through large, heavy metal doors and enter the foyer lobby where the white and dark gray ceramic tiles still sparkle. The walls are of black Italian Carrara marble. The handsome stairway is of white marble with black metal risers; its metal banister hand-tooled in a geometric design with a handsome bent-wood railing. An egg and dart accent adorns the stairway walls.

The upper stories of the building are configured in a U shape. The middle section, facing Main Street is called the Central Section, with the West and East Section on either side. The hallway floors on the second and third stories are made of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch tongue-in-groove Red Douglas fir, restored to their original sheen. The floors of the offices, doors and windows, are of Golden Oak. The oak trim and doors hidden under multiple coats of paint in the offices have been restored to their initial elegance. The interior windows and doors have original opaque patterned glass which allows light to shine through, yet not reveal interiors. The color of the walls is the original color "butter cream". The building has been completely retrofitted with seismic reinforcing, yet touches of nostalgia remain as the visitor sees the original fire hoses mounted on hallway walls and steam heat radiators in some offices. These relics of the past are still in working order, but are not used because of updating the air conditioning and heat, and all necessary compliance with

building codes. There are two roomy restrooms on the second and third floors featuring original tile floors, marble stalls and walls.

In 1905 Weeks opened an architectural office in San Francisco. He remembers seeing many buildings and homes collapse during the 1906 earthquake. Noticing several buildings that did not fall down, he studied them and came up with techniques that he later incorporated in his buildings. The Porter Family owned the building until the mid-1920s. The Porter Building, a major construction project of sophisticated design and modern technology, required the skills of an advanced and experienced general contractor Earle L. Younger. He worked with Weeks on many other Woodland buildings including a new building (1924) at 327 College Street, along Dead Cat Alley behind the Porter Building, for use of the post office. In 1935 this building was remodeled into the Porter Movie Theater after the post office relocated to its new (and present) location on Court Street. Because this building was not a part of the Porter Building, it has a separate entrance on College Street.

A testimony to the forward thinking of the architect, Mr. Weeks, is that after so many years, the building remains in stable condition, with no dry rot or deterioration of the brick wall's mortar.

TENANTS 1913 TO WWII: Post Office, The Woodland Medical Center, dental offices, County offices, attorneys and small private businesses, among them Leithold Drugstore, Red Bud Candy Store, Yolo Savings, The dental offices in the Central Section of both upper floors had a built-in closet and a sink in each room.

MID-LIFE: THE WAR YEARS – TO 1970' S

On the second and third floors there were there were many offices, among them the Girl Scouts; dentists Dr. Earl and Donnel Fisher; Dr. Hayworth, O.D.; Max Waters, M.D. The Medical Offices of W.J. Blevins, Sr. M.D. and William J. Blevins, Jr. M.D., John O'Hara, M.D., and Roy Neuman, M.D occupied the entire west wing of the second floor from south to north. Theirs was a complete, self-contained medical practice with a reception office, exam rooms, and X-Ray, laboratory, and EKG capabilities.

J.B. McKinney's Dry Goods Store occupied the first floor along with The Gift Tree, Bob Cross's Jewelry, optometrist, Dr. Henry Graeser, and Deschler's Optical Shop where William Clark, optometrist, worked until he opened his own office across Main Street near The Hotel Woodland.

A local legend is that when a customer asked for a certain type of button or sewing supply, Mr. McKinney would run down the stairs to the basement, and then quickly re-appear with the requested item in his hand.

In the early 1970's, The Peddlers Corner transformed the first floor and basement into small individually owned shops. It was here you could find unusual and hand made items for the home including home-made gifts at The Jaberwocky; The Embroideress, a needlework shop owned by Bob and Ruth Maddux; Potpourri Kitchen Ware owned by Patsy Pereira (Timothy); Bubba's Leather, plus The Strawberry Patch owned by Becky

and Doug Gordon, and Mama's Place, owned by Sharon Castellanos and her mother, Helen Earl Singleton where you could find the best food in town.

RENOVATION AND RE-BIRTH: 2006

New owners, Bob and Lyn Martinez purchased the 40,000 square foot Porter Building in 2006 from The Olson Trust. An extensive restoration began which is still in progress. Talented local architect Duane Thompson is heading the project.

Renovation of the West Wing of the first floor was the first to be completed and is now the home of Cambridge College, a training school for medical support staff. The crisp, sleek interior is bustling with students who enjoy the finest in modern educational technology.

The second and third floors are in the process of restoration and will be let to businesses when completed. There will be approximately 42 office spaces available. Many of the spaces are configured to serve as suites or can be closed off by existing doors for single rooms. The dropped ceilings in the hallways have been removed to expose beautiful coffered ceilings.

The basement has revealed many surprises and treasures and mysteries. One of the most interesting is the hundreds of costumes still hanging on wire hangers, undamaged by water or insects. Another surprise was the discovery of two slot machines, one even giving up a quarter after all these years.

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