

NORTH PARK STREET

INTENSIVE LEVEL SURVEYS

Downtown Owosso Historic District



Address: 218 N. Park Street

Site: Woodbury Building

Date: 1922

Status: Contributing

Description:

The dignified, symmetrical two-story brick façade of this early twentieth-century commercial building is visually divided into three sections, each with its own entrance. Strong vertical piers at either end extend upward past the handsome cornice moulding and culminate in flat-topped platforms supporting large spheres. Matching piers and the parapet wall in the center section extend even higher, supporting identical platforms and spheres. The original first floor windows were replaced in the past decade.

The street level façades of all three units indicate modern adjustments (the bricks beneath the front windows do not match those in the rest of the building) but the arrangement of entrance door and abutting windows may well be original. The door and windows of each unit are capped by a slender band of cornice moulding.

The uniform windows in the second floor façade are symmetrically positioned within each section. The windows have no lintels and their sills consist of a simple row of bricks. In a departure from the otherwise symmetrical design of the façade, the left and center sections each have two windows, while the right section has three that are more closely grouped within an area of the same size. Above the seven second floor windows, placed almost into the frieze, are individual round air vents set within a row of brick circles, a delightful addition that imparts a flavor of Federal style to the façade, unusual, though not unique among Owosso's surviving downtown buildings. Above the air vents, plain, handsome cornices terminate at the piers.

The taller center section of the façade is enhanced by two panels of text. A panel centered within the row of air vents states the building's completion date, 1922.

A second panel centered above the first, just below the cornice, bears the name of the original owner, MARK WOODBURY. In the 1990s, Bill Winchester, a longtime Woodbury employee, removed the building's rusted finials and crafted replicas which have replaced the deteriorated originals.

This building is unusual among those in downtown Owosso, built after Victorian flourishes had fallen out of style, and before Modernism had entirely stripped such buildings of classical

detail. This solid, well preserved façade, is lightened and rendered less severe by the inclusion of the seven round air vents and fine cornices.

History & Significance:

1922 The building is constructed by Mark Woodbury at a cost of \$85,000, as home to Woodbury Sheet Metal Company, which Mark had founded in 1914 above Jefford's Meat Market at 113 E. Main Street. When the company moved into the new building, occupying the first floor, the second became home to the Owosso Business School and four residential apartments.

Mark Woodbury was born in 1878 in Laingsburg, where members of his family had settled, and where one of the primary north-south roads in Shiawassee County now bears the family name. He began plying his trade making cookware in the basement of Pierce and Gerow's building, which was later owned by Arthur Ward. Woodbury later fabricated such diverse items as stove pipes, eaves troughs, copper wash boilers and dairy farm utensils.

Woodbury lost his building during the Depression, but moved operations into a garage next to his house around the corner on Exchange Street. When the business grew, the house was demolished to make way for expanded work facilities, where the work continued under subsequent generations of the family, including Mark's sons, Joseph and Carl, and his grandson, John. The company provided custom metalworking services to local factories in Michigan, as well as to customers in Russia, China, Sri Lanka and various countries in South America. The Woodbury Sheet Metal Company was sold to a new owner in 2005.

1945-1980 Ross Buick, car dealership, and later, Ross Automotive Parts, both owned by Harlan Ross, occupied the building.

1958-1958 YMCA occupies the second floor before moving into their current facility on W. Main Street.

1960-1980 Owosso Graphic Arts did business here before moving into their own building on Delaney Road.

1980s-2005 The Woodbury family reacquired the building, converting the remaining office space on the second floor into apartments, in addition to the original four. The first floor was used as storage space for the sheet metal business on E. Exchange.

2005- New owners have converted the ground floor into three small store fronts.

Photos:



Downtown Owosso Historic District



Address: 220-22. N. Park Street

Site: Dr. William Knecht

Date: 1955 ca.

Status: Non-contributing

Description:

This single story, ranch-style building is constructed of light-colored brick, with a single gable front.

History & Significance:

This modest structure was built in the mid-1950s by Dr. Leonard Wade to house his dental office, where he operated until June 1968, at which time he sold the practice and property to Dr. William Knecht. Dr. Knecht was born in Los Angeles, California, in 1936, and graduated from Loma Linda Dental School in 1968, after which he opened his practice in Owosso. Dr. Knecht's practice currently includes his son, Dr. Roger Knecht, and Dr. Phillip J. Wolf.

The original building consisted of 900 square feet. An additional 500 square feet were added in 1974. In 1978, Dr. Knecht purchased the business next door, Orsers Printery, which he demolished to rebuild a second addition of 1400 square feet, bringing the total area to 2800 square feet.