

Woodland Historic Architecture Tour

Overview:

Welcome to Woodland. Woodland is a treasure box of housing styles. It offers a greater diversity of styles, in better condition and for a longer period than any other city in California. Woodland housing reflects a broad cross-section of American and California home building history. This tour highlights some of Woodland's outstanding and unique architecture. **The objective of this tour is to appreciate the rich diversity and subtle details of style.** This was originally designed as a 4-mile Bicycle Tour. However, breaking the tour into multiple segments by walking or driving is equally interesting.

PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB THE RESIDENTS

0) Visitor Parking:

This tour was designed for parking at the SW corner of 3rd & Courts Sts. However, on-street parking is generally available for those who are driving and/or intermittently walking.

Brief History of Woodland:

In the 1840s, Woodland was a largely uninhabited oak forest. Early settlers chose to live on high ground. Originally the Yolo County seat was in West Sacramento. However, after a severe flood in 1862, the county seat was moved to Woodland because it was 30 feet higher than the Sacramento River and unlikely to flood. In 1869, a railroad station was established in Woodland as a branch off the first Transcontinental Railroad. This led to an era of great prosperity. Initial farming included sheep, cattle and wheat for export to the rest of the country. Current crops are rice, alfalfa, tomatoes, corn, sunflower seeds, and almonds. In 1888, the Eureka Newspaper declared Woodland was the richest town in the country, relative to its population. Early farmers, bankers, lawyers, doctors, shop owners and business men were very prosperous. Over the decades, Woodland has enjoyed competitive home building. Very few architects were involved in the early years. Many were self-trained builders. Following the San Francisco earthquake, there was a Renaissance in California housing styles, some of which was influenced by the Berkeley School of Architecture.

1) Dead Cat Alley: (Just North of Main St between 3rd & College Sts.)

Dead Cat Alley is the back alley North of the Main Street shops. It originally included stables, a Chinese laundry, opium dens and houses of ill repute. In the 1990s, there was a restoration of Dead Cat alley which added historical plaques and artwork. Ceramic Alley Cats were installed atop of some buildings. There is an elegant white building surrounded by palm trees near the corner of Dead Cat Alley and 1st St. This is a Carnegie Library. It is reputed to be the oldest Carnegie Library still in continuous use in the US.

2) Historic Main St. (Between 3rd & College Sts.)

Woodland has had a unique advantages in that it is not located on Route 99. Many Central California cities are connected by Route 99. As automobiles started to dominate the roadways, early buildings on their Main Sts. were torn down to make room for strip malls or parking lots. Sadly, much of their early architectural history has disappeared. Much of Woodland's heritage is either untouched or it is not on Main St.

The Woodland Opera House at Main Street and 2nd St. (340 Second St.) is a centerpiece for many Woodland activities. The original opera house was built in 1885. Sadly in 1892, it burned down and remained vacant for decades. Eventually, historical preservation funds became available and the opera

house was restored in 1998. Now, Opera House features plays and concerts on a regular basis. Plays attract professional actors from the greater Sacramento area. Associated classes are available for children's acting and singing are also offered.

Main Street has many original store fronts. Typically, these have narrow street frontages but are actually quite deep. Originally, Woodland had wooden sidewalks, covered with awnings to protect strollers from the afternoon sun. Going West on main St., there are cute boutiques, restaurants and restorations. Recently, local developers have pursued historic restorations. For example, the Tri-Cities Bank at 626-630 Main St. was originally was the terminal for the electric trolley connecting Sacramento and Woodland. After many years of dormancy, a local developer renovated the station into a bank space, while re-creating the original terminal's façade.

3) **Prairie Modern Fusion** (555 College Ave.)

This home was a style changer in 1915. Victorians were no longer in style. The exterior features simple lines and a lack of ornamentation in contrast to Victorians with their excess decoration. This wide horizontal expanse facade is reminiscent of the Prairie. The designs of Frank Lloyd Wright were the builder's inspiration. Features include a flat roof and a single-story built close to the ground. There were few windows or eaves to cool the house. Other features include early versions of casement windows and a central chimney for central heating. The front porch has massive front pillars that give it a classic feeling of pergola with vines. If the porch had a swing, it might remind a visitor of the veiled nymphs in a Maxwell Parrish painting. Sadly, a recent owner has added several olive trees that obscure the look.

4) **Italianate Victorians and California Bungalows** (Corner of College and Cross Sts.)

Italianate Victorian style (640, 648 and 656 College) were built between 1874 and 1878. They are affectionately referred to as the Three Sisters. Victorians typically highlight verticality. The first floor is raised significantly above ground level. High ceilings can range from 10 to 12 to even 14 feet. These homes are classed as Italianate Victorians because their exteriors use redwood to simulate the stone facades reminiscent of Italian Palazzos or provincial villas. Typical features include hipped roof flat roof with sloping sides, symmetric facades, tall narrow vertical double hung windows, and ornate stone like scrollwork over the windows. Bay windows connect the interior to the street. Broad eaves are supported by decorative brackets. Entry ways are popped forward with decorative pillars. Other features include false balconies, ornamental iron work on the roof. Originally, cast iron fences surrounded the properties but these were harvested for the war effort in WWI. Another common feature are central chimneys, often attached to multiple fireplaces. Each property originally had a carriage house behind to store carriages and horses.

Bungalows/Craftsman Styles (703, 705 and 709 College St.)

These bungalows built between 1910 to 1920. As the Victorian era drew to a close, the bungalow style was popularized by Charles Keeler in an essay called "The Simple House". He encouraged simple honest home designs without gaudy ornamentation. Gustav Stickley, the originator of Stickley furniture, further popularized this style in his Craftsman Magazine. He stressed the use of natural materials such as wood, stone, and the use of distressed brick that reflected the skill of the builder rather than faux stone. Later bungalows featured a new material - stucco exteriors. There is a strong Prairie influence with the square windows and unequal size pawns. Broadly overlapping eaves sheltered the interior from sun and rain. The roofs were low sloping often with a single dormer. Side porches were covered for shade. Exaggerated pillars support the front porch. There is a cozy flow into the interior. Interiors often had an open floor plan with half wall dividers between living room and dining room. Dark walnut and chestnut interior trim were common. Often there were built in cabinetry and bookcases. Oak floors typically had

inlaid walnut trim.

5) **Craftsman Bungalow, Transitional Queen Ann Victorian & Colonial Revival.** (Corner of College & Pendergast Sts.)

The oldest largest and possibly largest **Craftsman Bungalow** in Woodland was built in 1910 at 749 College. This is similar to a design featured in Stickley's Craftsman Magazine in 1909. It features large clapboards, a clinker brick chimney, broad dormers, wooden shingled roof and broad eaves. The chimney on the South side suggests that central heating was available. The rustic color gives the building a cozy feeling. The broad porch under shaded by native oaks is inviting in the late afternoon.

Transitional Queen Ann Victorian at 803 College St. represents a transition to the Queen Ann Victorian design era. Built in 1903, it has a vertical feeling of earlier Victorians but it is less decorative than the Italianate Victorians. The elaborate porch has a faux turret over the entry. Other features include decorative finial and very symmetric prominent Gables on the North side. The house features both round and square bay windows. The chimney is decorative.

Colonial Revival at 804 College St. was built in 1904. This house is reminiscent of East Coast center hall colonial designs. The basic facade is a big box. It features three dormers on the third floor. The second floor features two double hung bay windows over a faux porch. The first floor features a wrap-around porch supported by Tuscan columns. The living room, dining room, and the kitchen are on the first floor and bedrooms are on the second floor.

6) **Prairie Tutor Fusion**, located at 756 1st St., was built in 1916. This is one of the most unique homes in Woodland. This was very modern design by John Hudson Thomas, a renowned Bay Area architect. Thomas is known for innovative designs based on Prairie designs inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright. It features low horizontal lines built close to the ground and a flat roof with massive eaves. In addition, the sides are overlaid by half-timbered beams reminiscent of an English Tudor. There is an unusually shaped dormer at the roof line known as a Jerkinhead dormer. This was the first home in Woodland built with an attached garage. Interior features include dark cherry woodwork and simple lines with many cut outs. This is probably the only **Prairie Tutor Fusion** home in the world!

7) **Cape Cod and Eclectic Styles.** (Near corner of 1st and Cross Sts.)

710 1st Street is a **Cape Cod** built in the 1923. Cape Cod designs were very popular in New England. This suggests the original owner came from the East Coast. The central structure is a symmetric rectangular box. The roof is steeply sloping with very short eaves and two dormers. The cedar shingle exterior is painted gray mimicking New England, where the salt spray turns cedar shingles to gray. There are several small multi-pane windows, again reminiscent of New England Cape Cods. The interior features a center hall layout with compact rooms. This differs somewhat from New England Cape Cods because it has one and a half stories instead of only one floor and there the chimney is on the side. Typical Cape Cods had a center chimney. Also front entrance is covered with an arched porch as compared to New England where front doors are often left uncovered.

540 Cross is a unique example of **Eclectic Design** built in 1923. Multiple French doors on the first floor are topped with rose trellises arching over the French doors. An early owner was the first Fire Chief of Woodland. He viewed the trellises as a possible fire escapes. The dining room and living room are open to form a single room for parties and dances. There is a side entranceway with slender pillars and a full porch. There is a screened in porch on the South side. The windows on the porch could be opened for summertime sleeping prior to air conditioning.

8) **Gable Mansion (Stick Vernacular) Queen Ann and Eastlake Victorians.** (Near corner of 1st and Cross Sts.)

The Gable Mansion (659 1st St.) is an outstanding example of the **Stick Vernacular Victorian** style. Built in 1885, it has a raised first floor, a vertical presentation with high ceilings, multiple surfaces, dormers, decorative brackets, a cupola on top, and vertical windows on square sided second story bay windows. There is an extensive porch with faux balconies. This was built by carpenter for two brothers were ranchers. This represents Victorian a stick Vernacular style because of its vertical stick trim on the second floor.

Queen Ann Victorian (638 1st St.)

Queen Ann Victorians represent a strong contrast to Italianate Victorians. While the first floor is built high above the ground, there is no attempt at symmetry in the façade. There is much more fanciful ornamentation with multiple roofs, dormers, and a balcony. There are multiple surfaces and textures with lots of gingerbread. Note the large gabled bay window and the curving decoration over some windows. This is in contrast to the more rectangular trim over Italianate windows. Highlights include three round Moongate openings on the porch and entryway. At the peak is a unique Horseshoe porch opening. There are multiple roof surfaces and peaks. The many towers feature complicated decoration including shingles, grillework, buttons, flowers, leaves, and ribbons. This house was lovingly restored following a serious fire in 1982. The restored home awarded the Great American Home Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1992.

Eastlake Victorian (632 1st St.)

This home, built in 1888, is a later example of Victorian home design. Unique verticals holding the porch over the entrance are reminiscent of the legs on Eastlake furniture, hence the name. Other features include a raised first floor, an angled bay window with an overhead dormer, a stained glass window, a decorative portico and curved brackets over the porch.

9) **Queen Ann Victorian** (458 1st St.)

Queen Ann Victorians were popular near the end of the Victorian era. Similar to other Victorian styles, Queen Annes are elevated above the ground and feature tall vertical lines, tall vertical windows and lots of decoration. However, as compared to Italianate, they are asymmetric with lots of surfaces, a ridged main roof with dormers, extensive porches, a carriage entrances, a 48 foot tower with a bell shaped roof. There are Moongate openings and a full second-story balcony. Note the extensive use of different shingle surfaces such as waves, notches, diagonals. Near the top of the East side there are even some abalone shells on the surface.

10) **Gothic Revival Victorian** (704 Second St.)

Gothic Revival Victorians appeared very early in the Victorian era. Gothic Revival Victorians were meant to emulate rustic rural country cottages. Compared to Italianate and later Victorians, the first floor was built closer to the ground. There is no symmetry in their facade. This was built in 1873. It is the only Victorian Gothic left in Woodland. It features steeply pitched roof lines. The ornamental arches over windows and the porch supports are reminiscent of a Gothic Cathedral. Broad eaves are supported by decorative brackets.

11) **Beamer Park** starts at the intersection of Beamer and 3rd Street. The Beamer Arches were built in 1914 to provide a monumental entrance "Beamer's Woodland Park". Beamer Park was Woodland's first upscale residential development. It promised to let people from Sacramento live outside the city.

Originally, 130 acres were purchased by the Keystone Corporation. Special trains from Sacramento brought potential buyers for the grand opening in 1914. Carriages drove passengers the 1 mile from the downtown train station on Main Street to Beamer Park. On the left is the original Beamer farmhouse (5 Palm Ave.), built in 1865. The original section near the back was wooden. Later additions added a front facade that is reminiscent of French and Monterey style homes with broad shaded porches. The wooden trim on the second story porch is reminiscent of a trip to New Orleans.

11) **Beamer Park** Development (Palm Ave. and Keystone St.)

Beamer Park continued building from 1914 through the 1930s. As a result, the development is filled several unique home styles, including bungalows, various period revivals and eclectics. But no Victorians! Victorians had gone out of style!

California Bungalow (15 Palm Avenue)

This is a large upscale California Bungalow built in 1919. It is built low to the ground with an expansive veranda attached to a pergola.

Bungalow (19 Palm Avenue)

This bungalow built in 1917. It is low to the ground with a broad porch supported by massive elephantine pillars and a large dormer creating an impressive roofline.

Prairie Style Arts & Crafts (1920)

Built in 1920 as a **Prairie Style**, this home again is low to the ground with horizontal lines and a flat roof. Again, elephantine pillars support the porch. The interior features oak floors with inlaid mahogany, wainscoting in the living and dining rooms, built-in cabinetry, a picture rail, wood coving and ceiling trim. The second story is an addition added in 2001.

Colonial Revival (32 Palm Ave.)

Built in 1919, this home represents either **Georgian Colonial** or a **Colonial Revival** design. It has a symmetrical facade with a low hipped roof and a front portico. The portico originally had pillars that have since been removed.

12) **Motroni Homes** (Corner of W. Keystone Ave. and Pershing Ave.)

Joseph Motroni was a prolific builder in Woodland during the 1930s & 40s. He was known for creating unique exteriors, often with whimsical historic revival features. Joseph Motroni arrived in San Francisco from Italy in 1906 at the age of 16. Many Italians were immigrating to help rebuild after the San Francisco Earthquake. He trained as a brick layer. He moved to Woodland with and his younger brother in 1915 with only five dollars between them. They started their own contracting business. Joseph e soon became a successful builder in this upscale architectural development. Excellent examples of his designs can be seen at this intersection. These include Mission Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, Arts and Crafts Revival, English Tudor Revivals, the Hansel & Gretel House, the Lava House, and the unique "Airplane House".

English Cottage (714 W. Keystone Ave.)

Sometimes called the Hansel & Gretel Cottage because of its fairy tale-like appearance, this home has a steeply pitched shingle roof which covers the second floor. The front door is recessed and there is a decorative exterior chimney to West.

English Tutor Revival (709 W. Keystone Ave.)

This country cottage, built in 1934, was designed low to the ground with steeply pitched shingle roof, a prominent decorative chimney, textured stucco walls and entryways outlined by block-like molding.

Spanish Colonial Revival (605 W. Keystone Ave.)

This picturesque home features a tile roof and a massive brick chimney. The low brick half wall on the left side is a typical Motroni feature. The gardening is exquisite.

Arts and Crafts English Revival (527 W. Keystone Ave.)

Built in 1933, this Arts and Crafts English Revival features exterior stucco walls with stone corners. There's a massive brick jerkinhead dormer over the portico.

Mediterranean Style (524 W. Keystone Ave.)

This home is often referred to as airplane house because from above, there is long central cabin, two wings and a tail that mimic the outline of an airplane. This home was built before air conditioning. The cupola on the roof provided natural convective cooling. When the house heated up, vents in the cupola were opened, allowing the natural draft to let hot air exit upwards and cooler air enter below through open windows and doors.

Spanish Eclectic (511 W. Keystone Ave.)

Built in 1937, the exterior is covered in volcanic fieldstone with brick accents, and a clay tile gable roof. Doors and windows feature massive hand-hewn timbers. Motroni modeled this stone home after his family home in Italy. Some call this the Lava House.

Mission Revival (503 W. Keystone Ave.)

This Mission Revival style built in 1937. Features include a red clay tile roof, casement windows, and stucco exterior with adobe arches. A palladian window overlooks the courtyard. The courtyard is defined by low half walls and a wrought iron gate.

California Brown Shingle (55 Pershing Ave.)

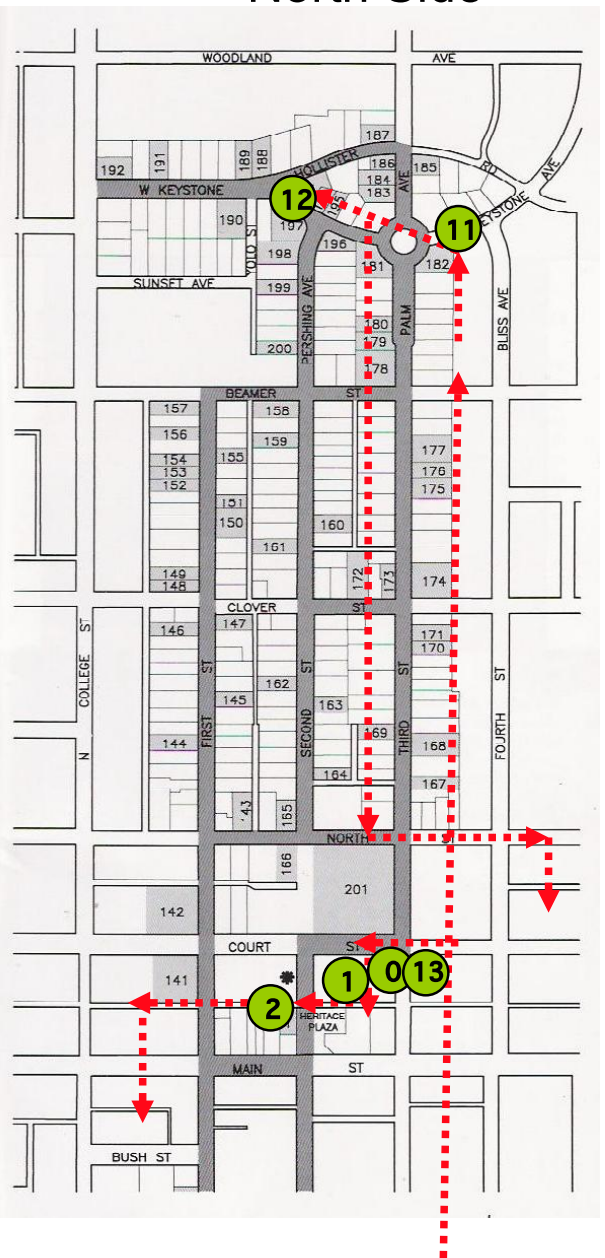
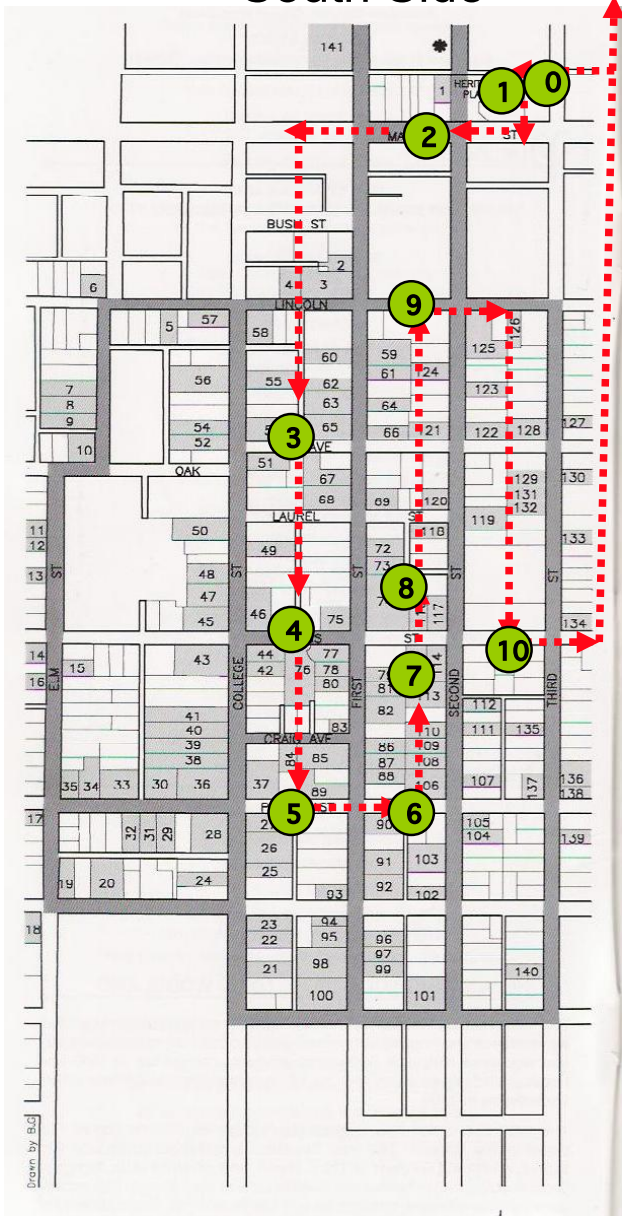
Built in 1919 and designed by a Berkeley architect, this California Brown Shingle bungalow features a broad porch, an arbor laden with vines, redwood shingles and a front facing gable.

13) Return to Your Car (Court & 3rd St.)

I hope you have enjoyed this tour. Hopefully we have developed your eyes to appreciate the differences between various Victorian styles as well as many other historic styles in Woodland. If you are interested in learning more, Woodland's Stroll Through History is held every year on a Saturday in October (<https://strollthroughhistory.com>). It features six historic open homes and about 10 free walking tours.

South Side

North Side



Drawn by B.C.