

## A DAME WITH A HISTORY

Pedestrians walk past her on the street but she's been there so long she fades back, unnoticed. Dust and dirt have filmed her eyes. Most are unaware or too young to remember that she was once proud and useful, serving her community as a bright, workaday citizen. She and those like her were the foundations of the young city, Paso Robles, whose only calling card was being "geographically desirable", placed between those big shining stars to the South and the North. Mother Nature took her final toll in 2003 and those eyes were shuttered.

Since then, standing at 1130 Pine Street, she was the only building that remained on the beautiful park in downtown Paso Robles that was yet to be rehabilitated. Finally, thanks to a new non-profit, STUDIOS ON THE PARK, her past will be valued and she will be transformed again into a useful citizen of the community.

1130 Pine Street has become the home of the innovative art center STUDIOS ON THE PARK where professional artists go daily to their workshops and the public is invited to watch them work and ask questions. The building also houses classrooms for children and adults and changing art exhibits.

Paso Robles City Planner Ron Whisenand comments, "This building was very important in early Paso Robles because it was a Packard dealership and a tie to Spring Street which was the former highway between San Francisco and Los Angeles. It was a prime stopping place for people along that route."

To meet the demands of these visitors and their cars, local entrepreneurs began to open auto related businesses downtown and before long the automotive industry had taken Paso Robles by storm. With its prime location and large size, 1130 Pine Street caught the eye of the Paul & Grace Reinke. They soon remodeled the building to include curbs and garage doors and opened the Reinke Hudson Packard Dealership. In 1938, after leasing from owner W. B. Bayless for several years, the Reinkes bought the building. Their dealership continued to be a cornerstone of Paso Robles commerce for the next 22 years.

In 1960, the building changed hands and became Pioneer Auto Parts, a partnership of Harold L "Mike" Wing and Norman W. Ellis. During their 14 years of ownership, 1130 Pine Street became the source for all of Paso Roblans automotive needs, from wiper blades to wheel wells.

In 1974, Harold Wing sold to Steve Encell, the current owner of 1130 Pine Street. Under his management, Pioneer Auto Parts served as not only a parts store, but also a community social center for Roblans who would share news over a cup of coffee every morning. He also introduced a repair shop in the rear of the building and it subsequently became the Napa Auto Parts Franchise.

Closed in 2003, Mr. Encell , over the next four years, considered various tenants but it was the philanthropic nature of the Studios on the Park project that sparked his interest and in December 2007 a lease was signed.

The one story existing building is currently being renovated and will result in what is being called Prelude: Studios On the Park. It will open in late Spring 2009 at 1130 Pine Street. In addition to artists' workshops, it will contain classrooms and exhibits. Future plans include a complete rebuilding of the structure as an 18,000 sq. ft. two story art center.

As one of the oldest remaining buildings in the downtown core, the renovation of 1130 Pine Street building is also an integral part of preserving Paso Robles' past. Designed by architect Larry Gabriel, the new building will honor the automotive heritage of Paso Robles. It will dramatically increase the amount of studio, gallery and classroom space and will provide Studios on the Park with the facilities to fully meet its commitment to bring the visual arts to the North County of San Luis Obispo..

Studios on the Park, Inc. is a non profit organization dedicated to providing a creative, educational and transformational experience to enhance the understanding and appreciation of the visual arts. It has a commitment to make the creative process available to the public and offers its visitors a unique open studio environment. Studios features artists working in a variety of media. It offers educational programs for children and adults and quality exhibitions by regional , national and international artists.

For more information:  
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