

# 2017 GOVERNOR'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

## The Carson Block Building Rehabilitation



Built in 1892 by lumber baron William Carson and designed by architect Samuel Newsom, the 3-story Carson Block Building was an investment in Eureka's future, sitting at a prominent location in Eureka's historic downtown. The Carson Block Building is exemplary of redwood's role not only in the growth of Eureka, but in 19th Century development of the entire state. The 50,000 square-foot building was built mostly of redwood and served as home to the Dolbeer and Carson Lumber Company. In 1991, the building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributor to the Eureka "Old Town" Historic District.

Over the decades, as the older architectural styles became unfashionable, the building underwent insensitive alterations, including the reconfiguration of the tall ground-level storefront to a more "modern" appearance, the removal of brick archways, and the removal of decorative wood trim and ornate relief panels. The primary building façades were covered over with cement plaster, and in 1958, the building's most prominent turret was removed for blade sign advertising.

The building owner, Northern California Indian Development Council, working with their project partners, committed to a multi-year effort to rehabilitate and restore the historic character and prominence of the Carson Block Building. The first phase of work included a new standing-seam metal roof to match the original and the second phase included a major structural upgrade and careful rehabilitation of the building's primary façades. Façade rehabilitation included the removal of the nearly 100-year old cement plaster cladding to reveal the old-growth redwood underneath and repairing the damaged redwood to withstand the harsh marine conditions. Additionally, building features that had been removed or damaged beyond repair, such as pebble-dash stucco, trim pieces, and the southwest

turret were recreated with local materials to match the original through careful investigation and research.

Humboldt County is a small, cooperative community and when it came to this project, the County truly demonstrated its commitment to communal engagement. Members of local economic development committees, City government, City council, local heritage and historical societies, and arts and historic preservation organizations banded together to secure the success of the Carson Block Building rehabilitation. The restoration brought passers-by together; turning strangers into friends with a common wonderment and awe regarding the ongoing rehabilitation efforts. Project staff made themselves available on-site to talk about the process and NCIDC's goals for the building's future. In honor of the building's grand re-opening, project team and staff toured guests through the building, allowing everyone from the community to take a good look at what had been accomplished. Members from the community shared personal anecdotes of their memories of the building. The rehabilitation of the Carson Block Building has further opened people's eyes to the region's history.

Learn more about the Carson Block Building:

<https://www.northcoastjournal.com/humboldt/witness-marks/Content?oid=3635632>