The Past is Our Future

The buildings of downtown Enterprise represent an historical investment in the future. From its earliest days, ambitious residents and merchants were determined to make their town the leading city in Eastern Oregon. A development boom in the 1910–1920s produced many of the beautiful buildings we see today.

WALLOWA COUNTY COURTHOUSE Look behind you at the large stone building with the tall bell tower. When Enterprise became the Wallowa County seat in 1888, thrifty county commissioners waited for over two decades to build a courthouse.

The courthouse and several other downtown buildings were constructed using locally quarried rock, called BOWLBY STONE—named after a local landowner and businessman. Stone masons cut and shaped the porous rock when damp from the ground. Hauled to town by horses, the stone would dry hard as concrete.

LITCH BUILDING Look directly across the street to the corner of Main and River Streets. The original wood-frame Litch Building was faced in patterned sheet metal to mimic the Bowlby stone of the newer building built beside it.

BOWLBY BUILDING Look on Main Street for the peaked roof with “1899 E.R. Bowlby” at the top. For many years, the street level was the town’s drugstore while the upper floor served as the Masonic Temple—a meeting place for the fraternal organization known for charitable work in their community. Note the Mason square and compass symbol embedded near the building’s date.

ENTERPRISE HOTEL Look across Main Street to the north. The Enterprise Hotel, financed by downtown merchants in 1903, was the town’s first class lodging. In 1937, fire damaged the hotel’s top floor mansard-style roof (shown) which was subsequently removed.

Preserving and restoring these historical buildings will bring new life to downtown Enterprise. Help support this business district by patronizing our downtown merchants. Discover more about downtown history—stroll down Main Street two blocks west to Warde Park to view another interpretive sign that tells our stories.

Protecting the Past

The project has been funded in part by a grant from the PACIFIC NORTHWEST PRESERVATION FUND & THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION.