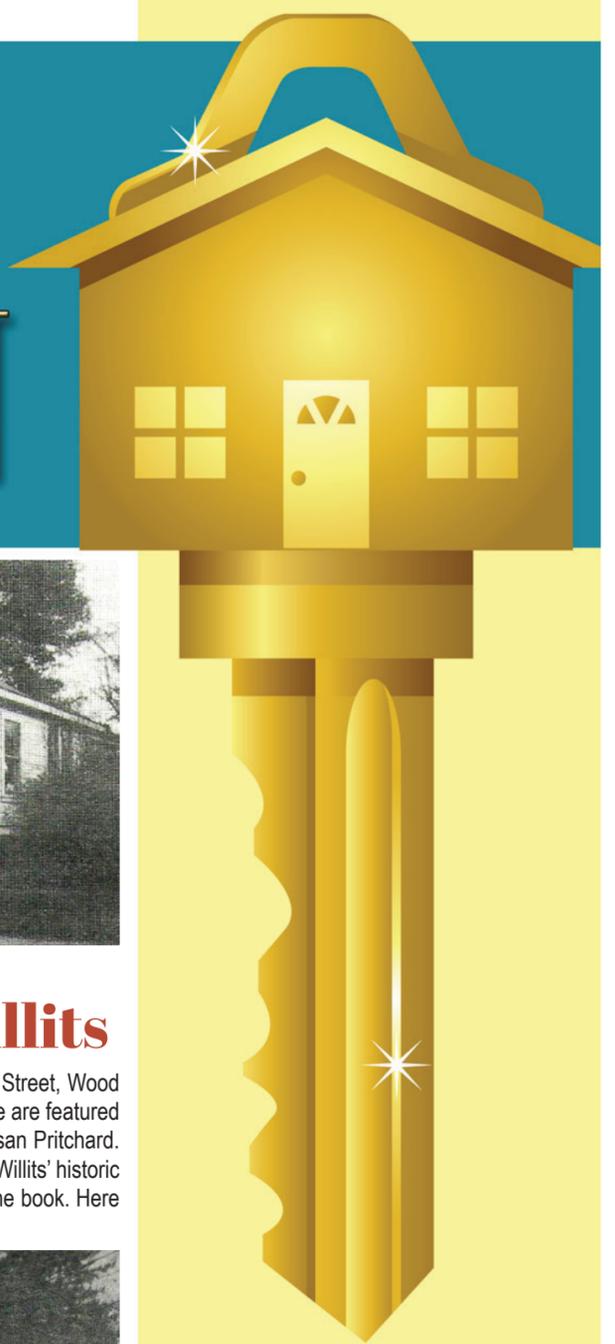


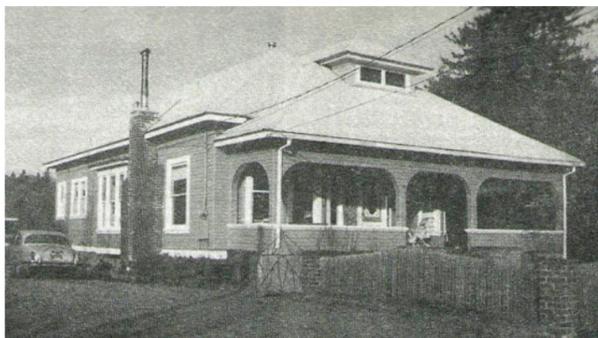
REAL ESTATE SECTION



169 Wood Street, Queen Anne-style cottage, built in 1905. First owners: F. W. Collett.

Appreciating the Architecture of Willits

Several neighborhoods of Willits feature the architecture of years gone by, including Redwood Avenue, Pearl Street, Wood Street, School Street, and State Street, with their Queen Anne cottages and Craftsman bungalows. Many of these are featured in the historic book "The Architectural Heritage of Willits" which was published in 1988 by Nelson Streib and Susan Pritchard. The book was commissioned by the City of Willits and includes invaluable information on the heritage of many of Willits' historic homes and commercial buildings. The Willits branch of the Mendocino County Library has a reference copy of the book. Here are a few "now and then" photos of some homes featured in the book to enjoy.



216 Redwood Avenue, low hip roof with box cornices, built in 1910. First owners: Sarah and David Sawyers.



19 West Valley Street, Queen Anne cottage, built in 1902. First owner: C. I. Mast. Now the law offices of John Smoot.

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707-841-8053 Lic#1949646</p> <p>Elida Cardona
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707-354-1538 Lic#1249091</p> <p>Zach Carpenter
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Interested in real estate?

Consider earning a real estate certificate through Mendocino College

One of the many certificate programs that Mendocino College offers is a "certificate of achievement" in real estate, through the community college's business department.

As per the college catalogue: "This certificate prepares students for a career in real estate sales/analysis, land development, real estate marketing, finance, mortgage lending, appraisal, escrow, and property management. The course requirements satisfy the educational requirements for both a real estate broker's license and a salesperson's continuing education requirements as prescribed by the California Department of Real Estate."

Core classes (all 3 units) required for the 24-unit certificate include "Real Estate Principles" (RLS 60); "Real Estate Practices" (RLS 61); "Real Estate Appraisal" (RLS 62); "Real Estate Finance" (RLS 63); "Legal Aspects of Real Estate" (RLS 64); "Introduction to Marketing" (BUS 151); and "Introduction to Business" (BUS 230).

To earn the certificate, students are also required additional 3 units from a number of possible business electives, including "Fundamentals of Home Inspections" (1 credit); "Real Estate Economics" (3 credits); "Fundamentals of Geology for Real Estate" (1 credit); "Property Management" (3 credits); "Real Estate Investments" (3 credits); "Real Estate Financial Calculations" (0.5 credit); and "Real Estate Licensing Preparation" (1 credit).

to choose an and real estate

Required real estate classes for the real estate certificate that are being offered this fall include two regular classes: "Real Estate Principles," taught by Nash Gonzalez on Thursday evenings from 6:30 to 9:20 pm; and "Legal Aspects of Real Estate," taught by Frank Zotter on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 to 9:20 pm.

Mendocino College also offers two required short-term classes this fall. The first is "Fundamentals of Home Inspections," taught by Nash Gonzalez, on Friday nights, from 6 to 9:50 pm, from August 26 through September 23.

The second short-term class is a Friday/Saturday class, "Real Estate Practices," taught by Nash Gonzalez, which meets on Friday, November 4 from 8 to 11:50 am and Saturday, November 5 from 12:30 to 6 pm; on Friday, November 18 from 8 to 11:50 am and Saturday, November 19 from 12:30 to 6 pm; and on Saturday, December 2 from 12:30 to 6 pm.

The two required business classes are also being offered this fall. One section of the required "Introduction to Business" class, taught by Walter Waterbury, is set for Mondays and Wednesdays from 12:30 to 1:50 pm. There are two other "Introduction to Business" sections taught as online classes this fall (log in on August 22), and one online "Introduction to Marketing" class, too (log in on August 22).

For more information about registering at Mendocino College, to check the course catalogue, or to submit an online application, visit www.mendocino.edu. You can also visit the Office of Admissions and Records (Monday-Thursday, 8 am to 5 pm, and Friday, 8 am to 5 pm, with extended hours TBA), or call 468-3000. For specific questions about the real estate certificate, you can reach Nash Gonzalez at 468-3000 x 4051 or ignozale@mendocino.edu.

How's the market?

By way of introduction, I'm Dick Selzer, and I've been in real estate in Mendocino County since 1976. After doing this for more than 40 years, I thought I'd share a few facts and opinions about buying, selling, renting and leasing property. I hope you find the information useful.

The question most often asked of real estate agents anytime they're out and about is, "How's the market?" So that's the question I'll be answering in all kinds of ways.

Right now, the market is hot. Housing prices have pretty much recovered from the bubble and are going up. Rates remain incredibly low, and there's not much for sale.

So while this is a great time to buy, there are a few obstacles in the way, one of which is finding a property that meets your needs. If water were not so scarce in Brooktrails and Willits proper, more houses could be built, but unless the Wente dam is raised or we build a pipe to bring in water from Eureka (or desalinated water from the coast), I don't see any more water becoming available here any time soon.

While new housing is unlikely, we're not experiencing a population explosion, so prices probably won't change dramatically one way or the other in the short term. As for rates, people always ask whether I think they will go up, down, or remain where they are. It's impossible to know, but experts don't think a rate hike is coming in the immediate term.

Even with the British exit from the European Union ("Brexit") last month, the U.S. stock market has already recovered. Lots of unrest remains in Europe, Russia and even China, and all that unrest can affect interest rates in the United States, but at the moment, rates are the lowest they've been in decades and no big changes are expected.

If you're thinking of buying a house, I recommend you do two things: find a Realtor you like, trust and can relate to, and get preapproved for a loan.

I know this sounds self-serving, but finding a good Realtor really is a great idea. When you think about it, it's clearly in a Realtor's best interest to help you meet your goals. If you don't get what you want, Realtors can't make a living, so the good ones educate

themselves about the industry and can provide you with a lot of important information and advice. If you commit to one agent – and it doesn't have to be one of mine – that agent will commit to you. Once you've got a good agent, here's what you can expect.

- They'll carefully listen to your needs and actively look for properties that meet those needs, so you won't waste your time looking at houses, land or commercial properties that don't work for you.
- They'll arrange to get you pre-approved for a loan so you're ready when the right property becomes available.
- They'll stay up-to-date on the latest market information (like inventory and mortgage rates), so they can make recommendations to save you money or share opportunities that you might not have been aware of.
- They'll work in a manner that's consistent with your lifestyle. Let your agent know how and when you like to communicate (phone call, text, email, mornings, evenings, etc.), and they'll work with you so you get information the way you want it.

So now you've got a Realtor, and the first thing they recommend is getting pre-approved for a loan. Huh?

There are basically two levels of loan qualification – "pre-qualified" and "pre-approved." Pre-qualified consists of sitting down with an agent and doing some simple calculations to figure out how much house you can afford. To become "pre-approved" for a loan means working with your agent to find a loan broker who will review all your assets, liabilities, tax returns, W-2s, credit history, and any other relevant financial information to begin the process of applying for a loan.

Next time, I'll go into detail about the benefits of becoming pre-approved and how to do it. If you have questions in the meantime about real estate or property management, please contact me at rselzer@selzerrealty.com or visit www.realtyworldselzer.com. If I use your suggestion in a column, I'll send you a \$5 gift card to Roland's Bakery. If you'd like to read previous articles, visit my blog at www.richardselzer.com

Dick Selzer is a real estate broker who has been in the business for more than 40 years.

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Hot, Hot, Hot

Willits real estate market is back up again

The real estate market in Willits is definitely hot right now – as Dick Selzer says in his column this month. Locals have seen For Sale signs go up and come down much faster than a few years ago. Prices, says Jennifer Poole, Editor & Reporter at Jennifer@willitsweekly.com, have gone up, and there's not a lot of real deals out there. Sometimes there are, especially if you're willing to do the work." Barksdale also noted that one of the reasons rentals are scarce in Willits right now is the Caltrans workers working on the bypass. "When the bypass is complete," he said, "those workers will be pulling up stakes," which is likely to loosen up the rental market a bit.

"Prices started going up," Barksdale said, "and then we took quite a jump at the end of last year, in sold prices, and at the beginning of the year, January and February, we saw a substantial increase in prices, too. Everybody started piling their places on the market, and then prices got a little too high.

"A three-bedroom, two-bath home is expected to sell at \$260,000 to \$290,000, and some have gone into the \$320,000 range," Barksdale said. "There's a couple of nice vintage houses in town that recently sold for \$320,000 – houses that were old but charming."

"There's almost nothing in Willits under \$200,000 anymore," agreed Peter Smith, Realtor at RE/MAX Full Spectrum Realty in Ukiah and Peter Smith Realty in Willits. "And nothing in Ukiah is under \$300,000. Drop down to Sonoma County, you can't find anything under \$500,000. In Cloverdale, you might be able to find something in the 'fours' range."

Smith looked up the statistics: On Monday afternoon, there were 57 residential units for sale in the Willits area – most of them in Brooktrails. "Only 24 of them are not in Brooktrails," Smith said. About half of these 57 homes already had offers – in some cases multiple offers. Smith said his rough estimate is about a third of real estate offers "fall out" without a deal being made.

"Most of the inventory is in Brooktrails," agreed Barksdale. "Most of the rentals, too. But there's not a huge inventory right now: There's more demand than there is inventory, and because prices went up so rapidly here, some people got priced out again. Affordable houses are getting sold rather quickly. A lot of people want over \$300,000 or close to it, and those houses are not moving quite so rapidly."

The rental market is tight, too. "There are no rentals," Smith said. "The reality is, even though the market is tight, it is easier to buy a house than to find one to rent, and the payment is the same. The issue is the down payment. And what I'm all of a sudden finding is that there seem to be some great down-payment assistance programs for people who make less than \$80,000." These programs are for people with a good credit score and a decent household income for Mendocino County, but "who just don't have the ability to save up to 20 percent down – or even 5 percent down. These programs are a great opportunity." Some the programs, Smith said, stipulate that if you live in the house for five years, the down payment loan is forgiven.

So, given how hard it is to find a place to rent right now in the Willits area, is it a

good time to buy rental property?

"There's not a lot of rental property for sale out there," Barksdale said. "Prices have gone up, and there's not a lot of real deals out there. Sometimes there are, especially if you're willing to do the work." Barksdale also noted that one of the reasons rentals are scarce in Willits right now is the Caltrans workers working on the bypass. "When the bypass is complete," he said, "those workers will be pulling up stakes," which is likely to loosen up the rental market a bit.

Smith said he's getting two or three calls a day from people looking for a place to rent. "Landlords get to be pretty picky right now if they want," he said. As far as buying rental property: "People are buying everything that would have a cash flow," Smith said. "You watch: One comes on the market, and it's bid on right away; four or five people are bidding the price up. That's the way it's happening, and the price point that it comes on the market – a price where an investor could make a return – it's gone."

Smith said what limited multi-unit properties are for sale in the area are also desirable now: "A couple of years ago, duplexes weren't worth much, but that has changed."

Back in 2004, faced with a state housing mandate, Willits City Council adopted a "goal" of adding 436 new housing units to Willits by 2008. Nobody really thought it was possible at the time, and with the economic crash in 2007 – bringing housing prices in Willits down by 50 percent – and then the drought, discussion about building so many new residential units dropped by the wayside.

"We don't have many apartments or condominiums," Smith said, "and maybe that's where the city could encourage low-income housing, with condos or cooperative housing. Places with 15 housing units on a couple of acres, like the senior center. Nobody has the property to build subdivisions. Maybe the city could get very liberal with people converting garages to granny units. That's what we need: one-bedroom and small units."

Both Barksdale and Smith said many of the potential buyers they are seeing are locals, some of them from the "back to the land" generation looking to move to town from rural acreage outside of Willits. "They want to be able to walk to the store," Smith said. "They don't want to have to walk a water line to see where a bear chewed through it. There's a lot of people moving down to town, especially on the west side."



Peter Smith



Bill Barksdale

"Some people are coming for the new hospital," Smith said, "and I'm getting a fair amount of people cashing out of the Bay Area. They are hitting their 60s, taking some equity out of their \$2 million tract home in Cupertino, and saying 'Let's put \$500,000 in a Willits home we can rent out until we retire.' They're looking in their retirement property. Everyone is afraid things could cost a lot more in the future. And where else to put your money? Put it in the stock market, in gold or silver, commodities? Nothing is stable. In real estate, we took the big bath, so things should basically be pretty stable now, with prices still pushing back up again, as long as they don't start making crazy loans again."

"The real estate market," Barksdale said, "is probably the biggest foundation in our economy, the biggest cornerstone. When real estate prices go crashing down, everything goes crashing down. Everything is tied to it: How you shop, where you buy, not only the local lumberyard, but supplies that you buy for fixing your house, furniture, carpets and floor coverings, and lawns and lawn care and gardening. All of these things are tied to job creation, and all are tied to the real estate foundation."

Visit <http://barksdale.com> for more information about Bill Barksdale. Visit <http://www.remax.com/realstateagentoffice/ukiah-ca-95482-petersmith-id20258791.html> for more information about Peter Smith.

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Restoring Willits' Historic Homes

Steve Marston works his way down West Commercial



Maureen Moore
Graphics & Photographress
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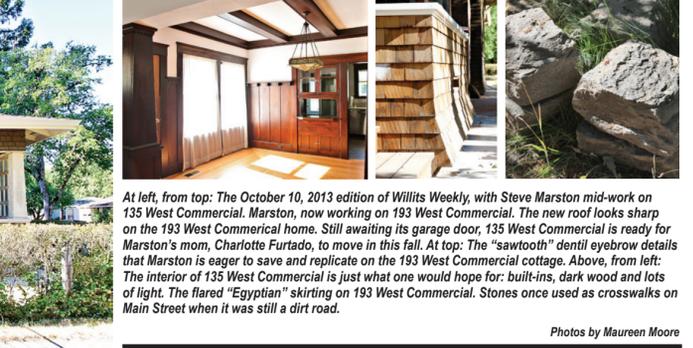
It's been three years since Willits Weekly checked in with Steve Marston, the local contractor who has made a mission of helping restore the historic homes around Willits, and especially on his home street: West Commercial. Marston started his West Commercial renovations 40 years ago when he purchased 126 West Commercial, where he still resides today. Next came 138 West Commercial, and then 135 West Commercial across the street. Willits Weekly reported on Marston's mid-way progress on the 135 West Commercial Craftsman bungalow in our October 10, 2013 edition.

The Benjamin Moore "Flora" light blue

paint has since dried, the porch sanded, and the garage (which Marston jokingly calls "mini me") is almost complete. The rooms have also been readied for the arrival of home's newest tenant: Marston's 80-plus-year-old mother, Charlotte Furtado. She plans to move from Florida to Willits this fall to live in the bungalow and, of course, be close to Marston ... literally just across the street!

With 135 West Commercial in the bag, Marston has now turned his attention to 193 West Commercial, the home that sits on the inside corner of the Commercial and North Street intersections. This home is owned by Jim Siebert, who has lived there since 1943.

Read the rest of **Marston** | Over on Page B6



At left, from top: The October 10, 2013 edition of Willits Weekly, with Steve Marston mid-work on 135 West Commercial. Marston, now working on 193 West Commercial. The new roof looks sharp on the 193 West Commercial home. Still awaiting its garage door, 135 West Commercial is ready for Marston's mom, Charlotte Furtado, to move in this fall. At top: The "sawtooth" dentil eyebrow details that Marston is eager to save and replicate on the 193 West Commercial cottage. Above, from left: The interior of 135 West Commercial is just what one would hope for: built-in, dark wood and lots of light. The flared "Egyptian" skirting on 193 West Commercial. Stones once used as crosswalks on Main Street when it was still a dirt road.

Photos by Maureen Moore

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Growing up in the home and being a part of the Baechtel family, Siebert wanted to ensure the heritage of the home and the longevity of his part in Willits' history, and asked Marston to help with renovations. The house was originally called the Landcaster House after the first family who owned it.

New windows have been installed, a foundation was poured – the home had originally sat on redwood sleepers – and a new roof was installed. Marston noted this particular home is a pyramid Craftsman bungalow, which features many elements that pay homage to the interest in Egyptian life and style during the turn-of-the-century era when the home was built. Flared skirt siding, unique gables and other architectural details can still be seen that showcase the "pyramid" classification.

"I really try to keep a very close eye on any and all the details the original builders made," said Marston. "When we completed the roof we were able to mirror the gable's shape, and I've been adding the 'dentil' details over the windows and doors and really trying to make the work blend in with the originals."

The dentil details are the little sawtooth-shaped trim that is showcased all over the house. Marston calls the pieces over the windows "eyebrows," since the shape of the dentil not only graduates from small to large and back to small again as it spans across the window's header, but also literally arcs away from the house in the center, creating a 3-D effect. Marston is replicating that same design over all the new window and door work.

Many treasures have also been found in the spaces in and around the house and yard. Several of the original redwood shingles Marston needed for repair were found and reinstalled on the siding, and old boards were found and reused throughout the home, too. Marston noted that new lumber isn't milled in the same dimensions as old wood and that old wood – as long as termites or water haven't gotten to it – is really better wood anyway.

Another find was a pile of cut stones that were used as the crosswalks when Main Street was still a dirt road. A few dozen of the foot-plus-long stones – once used to keep feet clean when crossing the muddy road – were found.

Plans to complete 193 West Commercial are in place, with a goal of getting paint on and dried in time for the winter rains this year.

"Renovating these old homes really adds to the town, and when we are able to bring these old girls back to life, we're really helping give the town an identity and saving our history," explained Marston. "We can keep the same style but upgrade them to be safe and modern for today's lifestyle. We don't have to make them museums; we can make them enjoyable and livable for another 100 years."

At right: The sheathing seen on the underside of the roof at 193 West Commercial Street is made of re-used boards. At far right: Marston shows off the original pull-chain light fixture on the fireplace surround at 135 West Commercial Street.

Photos by Maureen Moore



The Queen Anne Victorian at 166 School Street.

Photo by Maureen Moore

Queen Anne Victorian gets new lease on life, looks for new guardians for next 100 years

Originally a home built for Mrs. Margaret J. Willits, widow of Hiram Willits, the town's founder, the Queen Anne Victorian atop the hill at 166 School Street has always been a visual representation of Willits' architecture of the past.

Built in 1901, the home features three prominent gables with decorative spindles and star bursts and decorative gingerbread throughout. Over the years the home was converted from a single-family residence into a duplex, as it remains today.

In 2010 Willits real estate aficionado Alan Grossman purchased the home, which had fallen into disrepair.

"I had to remove four layers of carpet and sub floor to get back to the original hardwood fir floors beneath," reminisced Grossman.

The house also had survived an attic fire and years of tenant wear and tear. Grossman cleaned and refurbished the interior, and got to work on the outside with paint and details.

"Some of the gingerbread in the front gable was missing," explained Grossman. "Luckily we were able to find some of it in a wood pile that was outside. We used everything we could, and then made what was still needed. Of the 30 percent that was missing, we were able to find about 80 percent of those missing pieces."

Blair Rowland of Blair Rowland Painting made the outside shine with new coats of white, maroon and gold.

"I wanted something that would be different from the other houses, but still look vintage, yet contemporary," explained Grossman.

The original front door, complete with a dial doorbell, still hangs on the home, and a plaque was installed on the front bay commemorating the home's heritage and story in Willits.

Now, Grossman is ready to pass the stewardship of the home to a new party who will keep the story of Mrs. Willits' home alive for years to come. For information: 354-3874.

– Maureen Moore

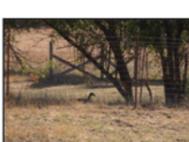




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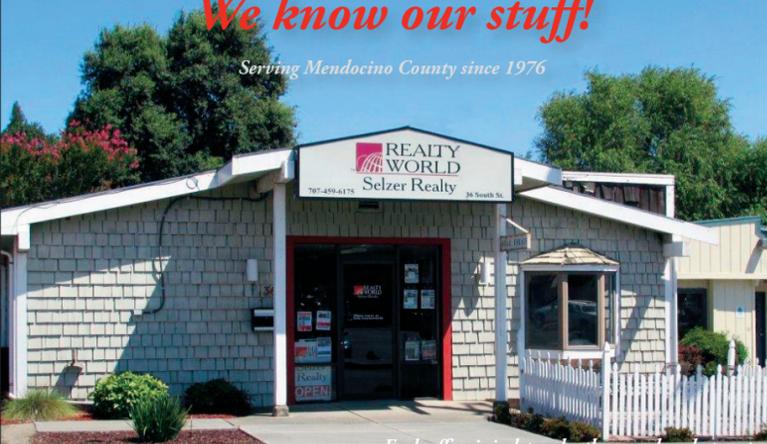
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